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Reflections on my summer gardens . . . . . p.12

# Canadians more willing to consider health care options

**Harry der Nederlanden**

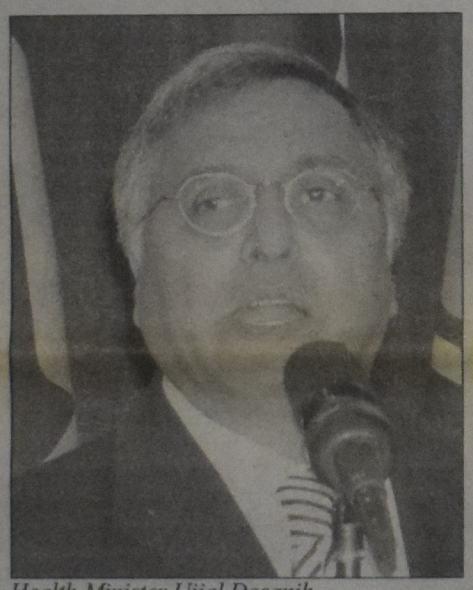
According to a recent poll, a majority of Canadians indicated that if forced to choose between a long wait and paying for tests or treatments themselves, they'd opt for the latter. While the politicians fear even to consider anything other than the present system, it seems that most Canadians are more than willing to look at other options.

The polling firm Pollara concluded: "Access is the issue and if they're not going to have access to it, they are willing to pay for it."

While 63 percent of those polled said they would be willing to pay, only 55 percent agreed with the Supreme Court ruling declaring private health insurance legal. This was because a large number – 73 percent – saw the ruling as a step toward two-tier health care.

Still another poll, commissioned by the Canadian Medical Association (CMA), suggests that most Canadians are unaware that Canada already has private health care on some levels. When asked about the proportion of health care funded by the government, most of those polled greatly underestimated how much is left to private responsibility. In fact, the CMA pointed out, most developed countries cover a much larger portion of health care than does Canada.

According to the Institute for Health Information, last year our public system paid $91.1 billion for health care, while Canadians paid for another $39.2 billion worth of health care themselves. In other words, about 30 percent of our health care expenses are paid for privately.



*Health Minister Ujjal Dosanjh*

Dr. Albert Schumacher, CMA president, said his association "supports a strong publicly-funded health-care system where access is based on need, not ability to pay."

That was before the polls and a couple of weeks before the CMA convention held in Edmonton in mid-August. The discussion of privatization was high on the CMA agenda. Just prior to their annual meeting, Schumacher had changed his tune a little. He urged Canadians to begin a discussion about non-profit insurance co-ops to enable patients to pay for procedures not included under medicare. If health care were an automobile, he said, "we'd all be driving Yugos."

He said that many of his patients in Windsor cross the border to get MRIs in Detroit. In Ontario they'd have to wait six months, while in Detroit they can get one within a few days.

Schumacher also suggested that in order for Canada to train more doctors, perhaps it is necessary to create private medical schools. In the 1980s the government drastically cut back the number of medical school spots as well as nursing staff. Hospitals have been scrambling ever since. Last year it was reported that some 3.6 million Canadians were without a family doctor. Most of them relied on clinics.

Between doctor retirements and a growing population, that situation is only going to get worse. While the country needs about 3,000 new doctors per year, it only has the capacity to train about 2,400 per year. The gap is partly filled by importing doctors from abroad, but some Canadian grads also end up in the US.

Health Minister Ujjal Dosanjh defended the present system. Just because a blend of private and public health care works in other countries, he contended, it may not work here. Why not? Because, he said, "that approach does not reflect Canadian values." Apparently he does not believe the polls.

Speaking to the CMA convention, Dosanjh said, "Choice is problematic if it means shorter waiting times for the wealthy few and longer lines for the rest of us." Despite the Supreme Court ruling, he said Canada is not about to allow the creation of a parallel private system: "Canadians want a publicly financed, single-tier health system to which access is guaranteed by need rather than by wealth and where the availability of the coverage is not dependent on personal insurability."

According to several newspaper reports of the CMA meeting, doctors challenged the government's dogmatic stand. Afterward, Schumacher explained that although doctors are strong supporters of Canada's publicly funded system, they've come to realize that there are limits to it. And he is now in favor of more

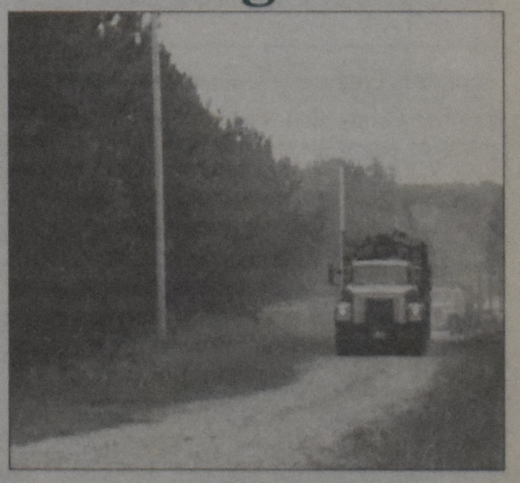
*See* **Health Care** *p.2...*

# The softwood story: NAFTA speaks, Canada cheers, the US shrugs

**Harry der Nederlanden**

Canadians, especially on the west coast, celebrated a NAFTA panel ruling that the punitive duties imposed by the US on Canadian softwood lumber is in violation of the treaty and that the $5 billion in duties collected by the US must be returned. The panel was established under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to adjudicate trade disputes between the two countries. Although forest industry stocks in Canada jumped at the news, most Canadians were not jumping with joy just yet. This is the third of such rulings to come from NAFTA over the last few years.

Lumber exports have been a bone of contention between Canada and the US for almost 20 years; in fact, there were already disputes between the two countries in the 1800s. Although the issue makes headlines in Canada, it hardly merits a mention in American newspapers, adding insult to injury.



On August 10, a NAFTA panel once again ruled that punitive duties levied by the US on Canadian softwood imports of 27 percent were in violation of the free trade agreement. Since 2002 the US has collected $5 billion in penalties and these were ordered to be returned.

In response, the US reiterated its contention that Canadian practices are unfair; moreover, not only would the $5 billion not be returned, neither would the antidumping and countervailing duties be lifted. (Those duties have recently been negotiated down to 20 percent.)

Antidumping laws in the US

*Continued on p2...*

News

## The softwood story ... *continued*

prevent another country from selling goods there below fair value. American lumber companies have long argued that the so-called stumpage fees charged by the Canadian government to lumber companies operating in Canada are too low. Therefore they amount to a government subsidy of the industry.

The US government does not charge stumpage fees for logging on public land. There, lumber companies have to submit bids for the privilege, so their costs are considerably higher. NAFTA concedes that this is true but denies that this constitutes a subsidy.

From one perspective all that the US producers are asking for is a level playing field (a favorite metaphor), but from another the US is once again seeking to impose its way of doing business on another country.

Lumber is one of Canada's largest exports, and almost 300,000 Canadians are employed in forestry. Canadian lumber imports account for over one-third of America's lumber needs. Since the duties were imposed, an estimated 15,000 forestry workers in B.C. have lost their jobs and many small towns in the interior have been struggling.

On the other hand, the forest industry has flourished in the Maritimes. Most of the lumber there comes from private lands, so it does not involve stumpage fees, which only apply to public land. Since 2002 production in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick has increased 62 percent, with 90 percent of the lumber going straight south.

Shortly after hearing the US reaction, Canadian Federal Trade Minister Jim Peterson stated that the best way to resolve the drawn-out dispute was by further negotiation. Some suggested we might get back 50 cents on the dollar and perhaps a further reduction in penalties. US officials were quick to agree that the way ahead was further negotiation, for this means setting aside the NAFTA ruling.

But this did not sit well with Canadian producers, nor with western politicians. What good is a treaty and a panel for resolving disputes if the US can ignore them at will, they asked.

Complained John Duncan, Conservative critic for natural resources: "We've spent years on litigation, and as soon as we have a big win, the sort of posture expressed by the government is that 'OK, it is time to negotiate.' This is wholly ridiculous."

An unnamed federal official was quoted in the *Globe and Mail*: "Those [NAFTA] rules cannot be flouted.... If the US can't see fit to recognize the rule of law, to honor the agreement that it itself established, ...it should not expect this federal government to take that sitting down."

Other Canadian officials spoke darkly of the end of NAFTA, of retaliating on US imports and of trade war. (The ususal sabre-rattling that has happened every time the US has defied NAFTA and WTO rulings.)

Provincial Premiers, meeting in Banff Aug. 10-12, demanded once again that Ottawa get tough with the US. "The US must be immediately challenged for this unprecedented decision," trumpeted a statement signed by all the premiers.

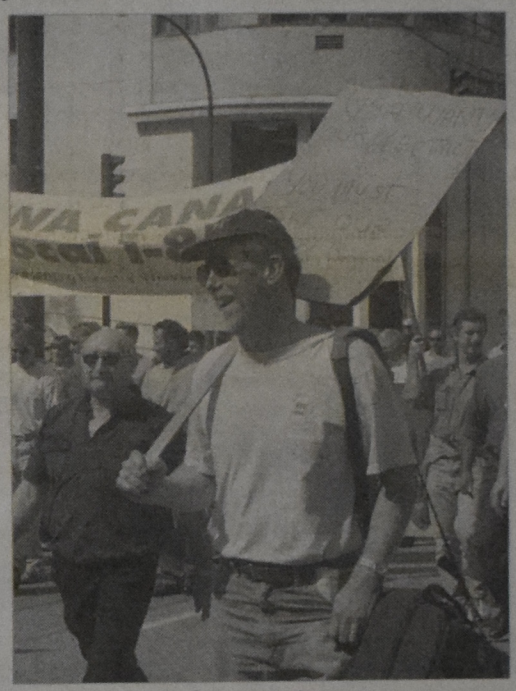
"What the Americans are doing right now is undermining the whole framework of NAFTA," said B.C. premier Gordon Campbell.

Summoning backbone, the Liberal government canceled the negotiations with the US scheduled for the last week of August. It also raised the possibility of slapping duties on California wine. Campbell also suggested threatening US access to Canadian energy. But Alberta premier Ralph Klein wasn't too keen on that.

As a matter of fact, any retaliating duties would quickly hurt Canadians much more than Americans. They import considerably more lumber than we import wine. According to the Canadian government website, about 83 percent of Canada's exports are to the US, and exports account for 46 percent of our economy. Each and every day our two countries conduct $1.8 billion in business.

It does not seem likely that the Liberal government is about to jeopardize Canada's current surpluses by starting a trade war. According to the *Vancouver Sun*, one of the lawyers of the US coalition that has been fighting Canada, when informed of the threats, replied, "I'm not quaking in my boots."

The US ambassador to Canada, however, was much nicer. He said he was willing to listen....



*Forestry workers demonstrating*

## Health Care ... *continued from p. 1*

choice, adding that when he started his practice there were more options than there are today.

An editorial in the *Toronto Star* scolded the doctors for "opening a divisive new debate on privatization." (But didn't the Supreme Court do that?) Although doctors know a lot about the problems plaguing the health care system and are in the best position to diagnose those problems, said the *Star*, matters of public policy are beyond their expertise.

Instead, argues the editorial, the public should heed the findings of the Romanow Commission and the Kirby Report. Recently, however, Michael Kirby, primary author of the senate report, said competition among health care providers – whether public or private – might be one way to improve service. He apparently does not consider modifications to the present system un-Canadian.

Quebec's Health Minister Philipe Couillard pointed out that health care now consumes 43 percent of his province's budget. In 20 years, he warned, if something isn't done it might consume as much as 70 percent . "We have to open the debate," he insisted, "and get away from the rigid ideological positions where if you utter the word 'private,' people have seizures."

In Toronto two clinics have opened to provide cancer treatments not covered by OHIP. Ontario's Health Minister George Smitherman denied that they posed any threat to the public system. "People are accessing services all the time in Ontario that are not provided by public benefits, so there cant be any offence there," he argued. If money could buy you quicker service within the system – that would be offensive, he said.

One of the private facilities offers prostate cancer treatments by high-intensity ultrasound, a treatment not covered by OHIP.

Dosanjh assured the CMA that "a tremendous amount of work" has already been done to reduce wait times. For example, the number of people on waiting lists in Alberta for open-heart surgery has been decreased 55 percent in recent years. And in Manitoba the wait for radiation has dropped from six weeks to one for most cancers.

This must be accomplished, he suggested, by addressing the root causes for long waits, that is, by increasing the number of doctors and nurses and providing home care to take some of the pressure of hospitals. He also stressed the need to promote more healthy lifestyles so people don't have to use the system as much.

An apple a day....

# Why jihadists target the West

**Howard LaFranchi**

WASHINGTON – A recent global upsurge in Islamist terrorism is rekindling a debate over the extremists' motivations that first spiked after the 9/11 attacks: Is the violence aimed at who we (the West) are – or at what we do?

For some experts, the attacks – whether in London or Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt – are aimed at the West for what it is doing: in other words for its policies, like the war in Iraq. Others insist that the perpetrators are more at odds with the ideals of the West and "who we are."

For the latter group, this is a war of civilizations or ideologies that the West has no choice but to fight aggressively, because anything else would entail appeasement and imply a retreat from identity and principles.

Yet for those who believe the violence is a result of what the West – primarily the United States – is doing in Muslim lands, one answer is to avoid actions that alienate and evoke the fears of peaceful Muslims while providing a windfall for the violent few. To some observers, the appeal of that argument is one reason talk is growing among policymakers in Washington of a drawdown of US troops in Iraq.

In Baghdad recently, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld seconded the desire expressed by Iraqi officials to see Iraqi forces take over more security responsibilities and allow US forces to begin leaving over the coming months. Mr. Rumsfeld said in a press conference that he "confirmed" the wishes expressed by Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari, and added that while there is no timetable, "we desire speed in that regard."

Of course, some experts maintain that the truth of the terrorists' motivation carries elements of both arguments, and that prolonging an academic debate risks putting off the best response. "It's not a question of either/or. There are certain elements of either strand of thought that have merit, and it can hinder finding the right response to dwell on the differences," says Magnus Ranstorp, director of the Center for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

### 'The size of the sea'

But others say the debate is important because it can determine whether actions are taken that help stem the violence – or make matters worse. "The question is how you reduce the number of bases [the terrorists have] and the size of the sea in which they swim," says Juan Cole, professor of modern Middle Eastern and South Asian history at the University of Michigan. "What something like the Iraq war does is increase the number of bases you have to deal with and the sea they have to swim in."

The recent bombings in London could

**Politics**

seem to fit neatly in this line of thinking: Britain was targeted because of its close association with the US effort in Iraq and because of its participation in the American occupation there. At the same time, however, the bombings in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, appear to bolster the civilizational argument – that this Mecca for Westernized Egyptian and European tourists was targeted for the sin of being a beachhead of a globalized, tolerant culture in Arab Muslim territory.

Another way to look at what is happening is "two camps working in parallel," Mr. Ranstorp says, "one confronting the 'near enemy,' as we saw in Egypt," where operations are carried out in core Muslim countries that are key to the struggle, "and another confronting the 'far enemy,' led by the US, and primarily because of its support for the godless Arab and other Muslim regimes."

The "what-we-do vs. who-we-are" debate over the extremists' motivations pits scholars like the Frenchman Olivier Roy, author of *Globalized Islam*, against experts like Mr. Cole; former CIA officer Michael Scheuer, who led the hunt for Osama bin Laden in the late 1990s; and the University of Chicago's Robert Pape. The principal petri dish in which their views have formed is the war in Iraq.

For Mr. Roy, a sociologist at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Paris, it is a vision of a dominant global Islam at war with a democratic and globalizing West that drives Islamist extremists. In that context, he says, Iraq is a convenient propaganda tool for recruiting young Muslims, including their Westernized and disaffected brethren, but it is not central to the Islamist ideology.

### The presence of US forces

On the other hand, Mr. Pape says in his new book, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, that it is not so much religion but US policy that drives Islamist violence. He concludes that the presence of US forces in Muslim countries, as in Iraq, increases the likelihood of another 9/11.

One problem with faulting policies is that it doesn't explain why stances that have long been unpopular in the Muslim world did not result in violence before now. "For a long time, some of our policies have angered people in the region – such as decades of support of Israel – and that didn't spark the kind of violence we're seeing today," says Martha Crenshaw, a terror expert at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn.

Like Ranstorp, Professor Crenshaw sees something closer to a combination of the two explanations for the violence. "This is not a spontaneous attraction of anti-American values, but a continuity that in some eyes, for example those of some young Muslim men, is being verified," she says. "In effect they are seeing an ideology that seems more and more right because of events – such as the US going in to Iraq."

Michigan's Professor Cole says he agrees that the Iraq war is "irrelevant" to the leaders who formulate and profess the Islamist ideology, but he says it is not at all irrelevant to the local constituencies that would act as the leaders' foot soldiers.

"The ideology is a kind of software that can be installed in certain people's minds," he says. "The question is whether we are helping or hurting the recruitment drive."

It may be that the young Muslim men who are willing to carry bombs for a cause are not so much full of hatred of Western values, but disappointed that they have been drawn to them – only to find, whether they are in Cairo or Leeds, England, that the door is shut. In any case, says Cole, the war in Iraq is "poor" counterterrorism. In his view, it is creating more foot soldiers for global Jihad rather than fewer.

*Howard LaFranchi is a writer for The Christian Science Monitor.*

*A BBC News website reader witnessed the immediate aftermath of the Tavistock Square bus bombing which killed 13 people in London. This picture was taken from Endsleigh Place, approaching the square.*

## *Democracy and political culture in Iraq*

**Principalities & Powers**
**David T. Koyzis**

Put aside the charges that the US is in Iraq for the oil. Put aside the rationale that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction at his disposal or was fomenting terrorism. One of the goals President Bush has cited to justify the US occupation is to build democracy in that country. If this venture is successful, he has argued, Iraq could become a shining beacon of constitutional government for the remainder of an unstable region known for its corrupt autocratic régimes. The Middle East might just turn the corner and leave behind its tyrannical past.

Yet what are the odds of this happening? It depends on whom you ask. The Cato Institute's Patrick Basham, formerly with Canada's Fraser Institute, believes that the chances are very low indeed. Recognizing that the building blocks of a modern democracy are not exclusively institutional, he argues that they are to be found within the values of a supportive political culture. Such a political culture cannot be willed into being overnight, and efforts to do so are likely to fail.

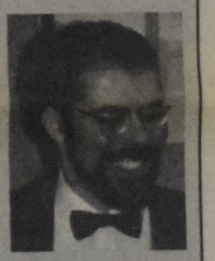
Basham observes that a democratic political culture consists of such intangible elements as respect for electoral outcomes and a smooth transfer of power, legal protection of ethnic and other minorities, equality for women, tolerance of dissident viewpoints, and a high value placed on political liberties and popular participation in the political process. Without these intangibles, democratic institutions will not function properly.

Drawing on democratization expert Larry Diamond, Basham argues that Iraq lacks these basic preconditions for a successful democratic polity. Although Iraqis have gone to the polls, one election cannot by itself produce a supportive political culture. If this is true, then American policy-makers will need to scale back their expectations and chart an alternative policy.

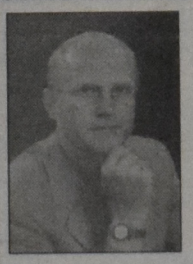
The Independent Institute's Ivan Eland paints a gloomy picture of American prospects in Iraq. He sees the US mired in an open-ended conflict with little chance of achieving its more grandiose goal of a democratic Iraq. Clearly, it needs to formulate alternative scenarios, including the possibility of the country's breakup or, short of this, an extremely decentralized confederation.

Of course, not everyone is so pessimistic about Iraq's prospects. Middle East specialist Eric Davis argues that Iraqis do have democratic precedents on which to draw, including a nascent civil society centred around the labor unions and other grassroots cultural and social organizations. Davis appeals for an effort to recover the collective memory of such precedents, which was very nearly erased by decades of Ba'athist propaganda. This is somewhat reminiscent of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's quest to anchor a nascent Russian democracy in the precedent provided by the 19th-century rural councils, or *zemstvos*. At the same time, good intentions do not necessarily translate into constitutional governance, especially if precedents for it are so few and far between as to require deliberate excavation or even reinvention.

Political culture is not a straight jacket. Bush likes to cite the examples of Germany and Japan, which rose from defeat in war to become prosperous and democratic countries, as possible precedents for a democratic Iraq. Nevertheless, any policy – domestic or foreign – that expects this to happen and fails to account for the central role played by political culture runs the risk of failure. At the very least, there is good reason to question a military policy whose success is so heavily dependent on a people overcoming the constraints of its own past to become something it has never been before.



*David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of the award-winning* Political Visions and Illusions *(InterVarsity Press). His weblog can be found at:* <http://byzantinecalvinist.blogspot.com/>.

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## Editorial

# Between heaven and earth

**Harry der Nederlanden**

Some time ago we received two books for review with the word "heaven" in the title, and I've been intending to introduce them for several weeks. Since Bert Hielema writes about heaven in his column this issue, I thought this might be an opportune time. By the way, the title I gave to Bert's column – "Heaven is not my home" – is the title of a book by Paul Marshall, former student and teacher at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, a book that has received excellent reviews.

The first book I want to introduce is one that compares heaven to a travel destination, a vacation spot. *A Travel Guide to Heaven* by Anthony DeStefano even comes with "Advance Praise" blurbs on the back cover by notables like Regis Philbin (Regis and Kelly Show) and Susan Lucci (star of a daytime soap). That's what hooked me. I opened it thinking to use it as a foil: I was quite sure that it would be brimming with unbiblical notions about heaven that I could use to set off my own ideas, which are, of course, guaranteed 100 percent biblical.

Much to my surprise and delight, the book, written in a very popular, accessible style, is really quite good. The writer is neither a theologian nor a pastor, and the book engages in little or no study of the pertinent biblical texts. But that does not mean it is biblically illiterate.

It is simply not designed to be a Bible study or a theological monograph. DeStefano's purpose is primarily imaginative: he wants to give us images to dream with.

Heaven, he says, is a place whose most serious business is joy, and so he prods us to envision it as the ultimate playground. Dismissing stereotypes of a heaven of clouds, robes, harps and choirs, he stresses that heaven is physical, an actual place.

He concedes that the Bible teaches that heaven isn't just a future place but also exists now. Those who die go to heaven. But they are not yet experiencing heaven to the fullest. That won't happen until they experience the resurrection of the body, for the senses are very much a part of life in heaven.

"The person that is going to heaven at the end of time is *you*," he writes with emphasis. "Not some disembodied spirit."

DeStefano stresses continuity between the present and our future state. Our resurrected body will be very like the one we have now. "It will have skin, which will feel warm to the touch. It will have a respiratory system. In every way you can imagine, it will be a real, authentic, *physiologically accurate* human body."

But DeStefano doesn't do away with the mystery of the transformation that awaits us. Although we are going to keep our present identities, "there are going to be *outrageous* differences that only God could think up."

But, he suggests, things like being 65 years old, maimed or obese don't belong to our essential selves. When you enter heaven, "you will enter as your truest self, *your best being* – emotionally, psychologically, intellectually and physically." So, no elderly or fat people in heaven!

Hard to imagine, but so is the converse. No one will imagine himself resurrected as a frail, doddering 98-year-old, bald and wrinkled as a prune. DeStefano cites Paul's first letter to the Corinthians to argue that the pattern God will use to re-create us after we are raised up is Jesus Christ.

Where is heaven? Where else but here on earth! "Why would God go through the trouble of making the Earth in the first place," asks DeStefano, "if his only intention was to toss it in the incinerator later on?"

God has a real love for material things; he is a sensualist, says DeStefano. He invokes wonderful autumn days, "the trees ablaze with oranges and reds," the colors of spring and lovely winter snowstorms. All these will be part of heaven because they are signs of God and glorify him.

But heaven is not just one "colossal nature preserve," cautions DeStefano. The book of Revelation speaks primarily of culture and of the city. So perhaps in some mysterious way, as we build our present cities, "God may actually be allowing us...to build up heaven."

Sure, some of what DeStefano writes is speculative. He admits as much. But isn't that what the biblical imagery invites us to do – to dream?

One of the chapters of A Travel Guide is titled "Do all dogs go to heaven?" Of course! Exclaims DeStefano. It has nothing to do with the immortality of the soul and the question of whether animals have souls. When God sent the flood, he didn't just rescue Noah and his family, but every living creature got a free ticket to the ark.

"God loses nothing," declares DeStefano. He invites us to think of heaven in terms of the movie Jurassic Park. That's right – the dinosaur movie. "When we walk through the woods in heaven, we're going to see friendly lions and monkeys playing with brontosaurs and stegosaurs."

I'm glad, however, that he didn't mention tyrannosaurus rex; with all those sharp teeth, I'm afraid he'd look frightening even when smiling.

"Does this all seem too childish and silly to believe?" asks the author. I hope so, he says, "because to enter the kingdom of heaven, you have to be like a little child."

Often DeSTefano's book is playful. But that is quite fitting because what he seeks to make us understand is this: God is playful.

All in all, Anthony DeStefano is quite a tour guide. He is never boring. So one of the central purposes of the book is achieved, which is to dispel the notion that heaven is boring.

The other book I want to mention is *Heaven is a place on earth* by Michael Wittmer. Wittmer is a theologian and he proceeds very systematically, but on a basic level that I think even kids in the last couple of years of high school can grasp. Step by step he develops the biblical worldview that affirms that God redeems not just individual sinners but the whole creation. I'm reminded of Gordon Spykman's theology, which basically clears away many philosophical misconceptions that often cause us to misread Scripture. The book assumes very little on the part of the reader and builds carefully and clearly, providing useful diagrams to help us grasp the ideas. It's ideal for study groups or a high school course on worldview.

Wittmer teaches at a baptist seminary, but he draws heavily on such Reformed authors as Al Wolters, Cornelius Plantinga, Paul Marshall, Nick Wolterstorff and even cites Kuyper and Bavinck.

In his article on the priesthood of all believers in this issue, Hendricks stresses "spiritual disciplines." These have always been stressed as the heart of the Christian life. Wittmer writes to counteract the reduction of the Christian life to such special acts, something that used to be common among evangelicals. He devotes a chapter to refuting the ancient Greek dualism that considers the body an impediment to true piety. We don't need to be saved from our creatureliness; our problem is sin, not that we are material bodily creatures. When John speaks of "the world" or "earthly things" to warn us against them, he is talking about the sinful way we relate to things; he is not suggesting that God's good creation ought to be shunned.

The theme of the book is that the Christian life is not about transforming us into superspiritual, quasi-angelic beings but about restoring us to our full humanity. I really don't have the space to do justice to Wittmer's book here, but it comes down ultimately to the same point made by DeStefano: that struggling against sin does not mean rejecting the good things God has made but only their abuse. God means to save us and everything he has made, including our society and culture, the animals and the earth itself.

The fact that books like these which repeat the theme that "heaven is not my home" suggests that the dualism of body and soul, spirit and matter still plagues Christian thinking. However, there's more reason to speak of this process in hopeful terms than in the pessimistic and generalizing way that Bert does in his article. Those who continue to revile the body and creation in the name of spirituality I would judge to be in the minority. In fact, not long ago *CC* carried an article by Prof. Calvin Van Reken suggesting that the pendulum may have swung too far the other way.

As to learning from the so-called "wisdom of the elders" (Bert's phrase), I'm afraid that it was precisely listening to pagan or natural religion that was at the root of the problem. Those who do not know the root of evil – our rebellion against our Creator God – seek the source of evil within creation itself. Paganism, especially aboriginal religion, has been romanticized as creation-friendly. Although I can't claim acquaintance with nearly all of it, what I have read makes me suspect that without knowledge of a loving Creator who became incarnate for us, we cannot live in harmony with creation. Fear for spirits and gods who inhabit parts of creation and make it taboo or powerful is not the same thing as respect and love.

Christians have strayed badly in the way they have sought to serve God, but we don't remedy that by turning to other religions, but only by turning once again to the God of Scripture. And we hear the God of Scripture most clearly in the company of his people, his church.

**Christian Courier**

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## Letters

# Who will advocate responsible politics?

The broadening debates regarding the formative role of basic beliefs, world-views, ethical values, or other core commitments that shape our personal, economic and political lives, are becoming increasingly relevant during the current (pre-) election campaign.

Our federal leaders and local candidates owe it to their parties, constituents and all Canadians to articulate and communicate candidly their views and goals, their particular ideologies, bottom lines and ultimate interests. They should clarify just how these political basics relate to Canada's diverse challenges, environmental and socio-economic needs; as well as to our international responsibilities, aid, development, peace and justice strategies.

They should explain how their different perspectives and proposals promote the common good; serving the well-being of all people, without discrimination.

Would their position help bring about inclusive public justice for all and greater respect for the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all communities that constitute the Canadian Mosaic?

All our politicians and parties should spell out, in their respective campaign platforms, which fundamental principles, political priorities, legislative proposals and specific policies define their agendas for Parliamentary action.

Real choices and commitments, accompanied by concrete promises and creative solutions, would stimulate intelligent analyses and positive discussions. They would contribute to a meaningful participatory democracy and responsible political involvement, aimed at building a caring and sharing society in a needy world.

Comprehensive platforms should include precise statements outlining both the lasting human benefits and the real financial costs. Thorough commentaries, prepared by respectable professionals (such as Auditor General Sheila Fraser), should also state anticipated fiscal deficits and/or surpluses. All concerned are entitled to reliable information, so that voters can make informative decisions before, on, and after Election Day, holding MPs accountable.

Canada should probably establish an independent organization (such as the Congressional Budget Office in the United States) to evaluate the federal budget, the economy, the environmental and social state of our country. It could then issue periodic statements on the size of the federal surplus or deficit, along with realistic projections on how they will grow over time.

An authoritative, non-partisan institution issuing understandable reports would help foster a healthy political environment, thus preventing vague election rhetoric, empty slogans and thoughtless promises that undermine authentic debate and useful action.

Clearly stated, politically relevant core-values and goals, accompanied by comprehensive fiscal and socio-economic consequences (both pro and con), are essential to a renewed, responsible politics of justice, honesty and integrity.

Which media and parties will be in the vanguard advocating distinct values-based platforms and conscientious politics, supported by comprehensible budgets and forecasts that will build a strong and free Canada?

Will the Prime Minister and/or the Opposition Leaders take pro-active initiatives now? Conviction politicians – here is your opportunity!

Gerald Vandezande
Agincourt, ON

# The bottom line in why we believe what we believe

In the recent article "Why are conservative churches growing?" (*CC*, June 27), R. Albert Mohler offers a comprehensive look at why conservative rather than the more liberal churches are growing. However, in the last analysis he also misses the point!

Still, I agree with him that Hoge, Johnson and Luidens offer a much more substantial and accurate analysis of why conservative churches are growing (over that of the Iannaccone in regards to the rational choice theory) in that "the presence of a compelling teaching concerning the ultimate purpose and destiny of humankind" allows people to develop "a meaning and purpose" for their lives. Consequently, Mohler believes that the fundamental issues in church growth are *theological* rather than *sociological*. He further notes that Evangelical Christians are willing to pay a high social cost for the Christian faith because they believe the gospel to be *true*.

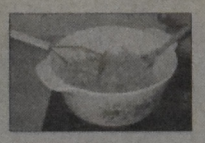
The reality is that we are *created and born* with certain necessities and potentials in our personalities. Among these inborn characteristics there is a *need* for a system of orientation and devotion that provides purpose, meaning and support for our lives. We usually call such a system "a religion" whether it includes the concept of God or not. This system also helps us face our problems, creates a vision of the future and motivates us in our spiritual and psychosocial development. Without such a framework for life, rich and poor alike would lose their ways and experience life as meaningless, threatening, and confusing and we could disintegrate into emotional illness or chaotic and/or criminal behavior. All of this is part and parcel of the spiritual and psychosocial aspect of who we are as human beings.

The bottom line, however, always is that in the *end* everything and anything we *feel, think and do* is really motivated by the desire or need to achieve an *internal* state that makes us feel better (whether we are aware of this or not). What differentiates us one from the other is not whether or not we *are* seeking internal well-being (as best as we know how in this sinful world), because we *are* all doing that. What makes us different from each other is *how* we go about seeking to create that well-being often choosing unwittingly from a smorgasbord of healthy or unhealthy behaviors.

The notion that we subscribe to a certain religion without any psychosocial influences or interactions is misleading. It shows a lack of understanding of who we are or how we function as human beings. Furthermore, in terms of the above-mentioned need or desire to achieve an internal state that makes us feel better, church *growth* may not necessarily be a good indication of healthy spiritual and psychosocial development. It could simply mean, "birds of a feather flock together" for safety, security and a sense of belonging. However, does this explain why the conservative churches are growing and the liberal churches are dying? Not necessarily, it may be that in this time of uncertainty, especially after 9/11 it is more *comfortable* for most of us to live with the *absolutes* traditional Christianity offers versus the *discomfort* we would experience by having to learn to *live with the questions* that is part and parcel of liberal Christianity.

Arlene Van Hove

Ottawa Citizen
Caglecartoons.com
THE OLD BOYS CLUB
YET ANOTHER IMMIGRANT WOMAN JOURNALIST... THAT'S TWO IN A ROW. WHAT'S NEXT? AN EDITORIAL CARTOONIST?
NEWS
MICHAËLLE JEAN NEW GOVERNOR GENERAL



## New hutspot recipe

A few weeks ago, when I alluded to hutspot on our Anniversary page, we also included a receipe for hutspot. In his wide reading Bert den Boggende came upon a recipe for hutspot in the 17th century. As you'll notice, it is quite different from the dish I remember, consisting primarily of carrots and potatoes:

"Men maakt het van schapevlees of fijn gehakt rundvlees, groene groenten, pinksternakel of gestoofde pruimen begoten met citroen-of sinaasappelsap, in sterke azijn geweekt, goed vermengd en lang gekookt met vet en gember."

[It is made with finely chopped mutton or beef, green vegetables, wild parsnips or steamed plums sprinkled with either lemon or orange juice, steeped in strong vinegar, mixed well and cooked for a long time in fat and ginger.]

Wild parsnips, I learned from the internet, resemble a white carrot that is less sweet than a carrot and similar in taste to a turnip. Maybe that's why it is steeped in vinegar.

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60th Anniversary

# Global peace, labor and mental health

**Harry der Nederlanden**

The orbit of the Christian life extends far beyond the boundaries of the church, the Reformed faith has always insisted, and that has been clearly reflected in the pages of *CC* over the years. From global events to how the workplace is structured in Canada to the mental health of individuals – it all comes into the purview of God's kingdom. We often don't understand exactly how, but God doesn't expect mastery, and we've long ago learned that although Scripture should be our glasses, they don't give us a privileged, divine point of view.

Peace is indivisible (De vrede is ondeelbaar) declares one of the headlines on the front page of *CC*'s Sept 4, 1959 edition. It could be translated as: "Peace is all of one piece." It's a provocative title.

The article is about the advance of communism, not just on the borders of Europe but also in the far east. The writer, L.W.G. Scholten, who was a commentator for the Christian Radio Association in the Netherlands and a professor at the Free U, contributed substantive articles on international politics for several years. Since the war (WWII) had been against a single enemy, he said, many insisted that the peace should be one peace. That didn't happen, as the Russians went their own way.

In 1959 peace talks were underway in Warsaw between the USSR and the West. Meanwhile, however, communist aggression continued in the far east: China, India, Laos and many smaller countries were succumbing to the advance of communism. There is no true peace, argued Scholten, until it extends to the whole world.

But what does that mean practically?

When the French withdrew from Indochina, they divided the area into a number of smaller countries. Now, as Scholten saw it, they were all threatened by communism with help from infiltrators from China. The infiltration of Laos was already well underway, and the country could offer very little resistance. Next to fall, he predicted, would be the countries bordering it: Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia.

But, he suggested, to cling to our principle that peace is a fabric of one piece would be to put at risk the peace in the West. Is it worth risking that peace to try to stop the communist advance in Laos and Viet Nam? Ultimately, he concluded, it's not about the artificially created state of Laos but about world peace.

So Scholten was contemplating small storm clouds on the horizon that a decade later would grow into huge clouds that would cause great storms thousands of kilometers away – in the US of A. What have we learned about peace in the intervening years?

In the first part of 1960 *CC* invited four different organizations based on Reformed principles to introduce themselves to *CC* readers: the Christian Culture Association of B.C., the Christian Labour Association of Alberta, the Christian Labour Association of Canada and the Christian Trade Unions of Canada. At the time they were distinct organizations, each with its own board and constitution.

The B.C. organization was not a labor organization but took as its main purpose to educate Christians about the need for Christian cultural action. So it envisioned the creation of Christian labor unions, political parties and more, but only after people were ready. The CLA of Alberta was only one year old at this point. It declared that it did not aspire to be a labor union but "a society interested in

PHOTO H. C. HEYBOER

April 30th - Queen's birthday

*When it comes to birthdays, every man, woman and child in the world should be permitted to be a Hollander for a day. It is a family day in the first place — but relatives and friends, classmates and office colleagues share in the celebrations.*

*CC continued to mark Dutch royal birthdays till well into the 60s*

improvement in the social realm." The writer pointed out that they were not just supported by members of the working class but also by "men of influence" like lawyers.

H. Kuntz explained the Reformed basis of the CLAC, stressing that the notion of neutrality is a denial of the very nature of man as God's creation, called to be responsible to God and his neighbor. He expressed the hope that the CLAC would soon be able to hire a full-time person to represent the organization. The CTUC was organized in 1958 by making some compromises to become a practical, functioning union under Canadian law. The organization consisted of five locals in the Hamilton area. The article rejects the materialism and the class conflict of the so-called neutral unions but also faults the many businesses that hire workers at wages far below standard.

The four presentations closed with an editorial by the *CC* editor that wonders why the four organizations don't join in a federation. It took a while, but eventually....

An article about Pine Rest by Ralph Heynen, celebrating its 50th year of existence caught my eye in the Aug. 26, 1960 issue. Its founding, too, was inspired by a biblical vision of faith as concerned with the whole person.

That means Pine Rest is now 95 years old. I started work at Pine Rest in 1967, about a week after getting married in Doon, Iowa. You might say I spent my honeymoon in a mental hospital, although that term was already taboo at that time. A couple of years earlier the institution had been featured in *Life* magazine as one of the most progressive psychiatric institutions in America. In 1960 it was treating some 1200 in-patients.

By 1967 some of the buildings were already showing signs of age, but the grounds were beautiful. Tall, lush trees provided cool shade and an atmosphere of serenity. Work there, however, was seldom serene. It was very stressful. But as I think back to those years I'm still impressed by how many committed and quietly competent people chose to work there. Many of them were practical psychiatric nurses that received their training there, and they did their work well.

The *CC* article mentions the farm, a patient choir, a coffee shop staffed by patients and courses in music and horticulture offered to patients. In 1960 Mulder Therapy Center, the first building where I worked, was just in the planning stages. According to Heynen, the grounds covered some 300 acres then.

About two years ago, I toured the grounds once more. Two of the buildings in which I worked most (called, imaginatively, Buildings 3 and 5) were no longer in use. One had been torn down and the other looked like it was being used for storage. Only one of the buildings I got to know so well still appears on the virtual map on the Pine Rest website – the Mulder Therapy Center.

The website says that a new building is scheduled to be opened this fall: the Senior Care's Dementia Living Center. Most of the therapy provided by Pine Rest is now done through clinics, it seems. There are some 20 of them in different Michigan cities, except for two in Iowa.

A few years ago, I received in one lump sum the pension that was coming to me after working at Pine Rest for almost 10 years. It had accrued interest for about 20 years, so I was looking forward to getting a few bucks. And a few bucks was exactly what I got – 20 bucks for each year of service. The message was clear: keep working.

(And my fellow-workers wondered why I was helping the CLA to try to organize Pine Rest employees in 1975. Well, no matter; it was a great place to work.)

During my 10 years, I worked in all six buildings on the property. From the new Mulder Therapy Center, I went to men's geriatrics, a three-story building along Division. I was the first male aide to work in the women's geriatrics building, a single-story building with a picturesque entrance. (The women loved having a man around.) Then I moved to Building 3, but sometimes worked in Building 5. The men in Building 5 had jobs to do around the property during the day. There was even a workshop that took on jobs like stuffing envelopes. Later a treatment facility for alcoholics was started in Building 3. Working there was actually fun, because alcoholics tend to be sociable folk. After ageing Building 3 was closed, I worked with mentally handicapped children in the Children's Center, but when a new unit to treat adolescents was opened, I was transferred there. By then, I was working the night shift and, when the patients were peaceful, doing a bit of translating and writing.

Pine Rest also provided employment and on-the-job training to a great many CRC pastors. I worked alongside a few of them and even taught some of them how to mop floors. Pastors should know how to do that.

Nowadays mental hospitals of the sixties and before are often described in horrific terms, as if they were harsh, abusive places to hide the unbalanced. That's a false picture. Before the creation of psychiatric drugs, of course, some patients were much harder to handle, but Pine Rest was a community, a healing community, staffed by many Christians dedicated to doing a good work.

I trust it is still so. God bless them all both great and small.

Come to the Annual

C.L.A.C. CONVENTION

Saturday May 7

SNELGROVE, ONTARIO

Morning and afternoon sessions at "Snelgrove Community Hall". Just North of Brampton on Highway 10.

Mr. BERNARD ZIJLSTRA, at present studying Law at the University of Michigan, will be our guest speaker:

"The New Challenge — Our Response"

A warm welcome is extended to everyone interested in the cause of the Christian Labour movement.

DO NOT MISS THIS DAY OF INSPIRATION AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Anniversary

# The church picnic

**Tymen Hofman**

The highlight, for me, of the centennial celebration of the first CRC organized in Canada, was the picnic on July 1. The church picnic is a tradition of long standing. Not quite 100 years, but very close to it. I know from my own memory that it has been held for over 75 years, and possibly over 90 years. And always on July 1st, or Dominion Day way back when, and more recently, Canada Day, unless that holiday happened to fall on Sunday. This year it was on Friday and the kickoff for three days of the centennial celebration by the Nobleford and Granum Christian Reformed churches, in Southern Alberta.

What made this picnic unique was the joint sponsorship of the event, with Nobleford and Granum combining to make it a grand occasion. This was a first. In the old days the Granum people would gather at a spot on the Oldman River near Fort MacLeod while the Monarch congregation would meet at the Monarch "river-bottom." The picnic was a bright spot in our young lives. Along with the Christmas celebration in church, it made the Depression endurable. This picnic brought it all back to me, with much in addition.

It was held in the Park Lake Provincial Park, the venue for the Nobleford picnic for the past 50 years. It's a fine spot for enjoying all the activities that a church picnic brings with it, particularly when the weather is right. On this occasion it could not have been better. There wasn't a cloud in the sky. The temperature was perfect – F. 75 degrees. (You may figure out what that would be in Celsius.) There was just enough of a breeze to intimidate the mosquitoes. I escaped without a single welt.

On arriving at the picnic we were immediately engulfed by scores of old acquaintances and well-wishers, not just from Nobleford and Granum but from all over the West, and even a few from Ontario. There was a good contingent from Michigan. It was a homecoming for people just like myself who had come to share in an experience of the old days in modern times, and to celebrate 100 years of blessings by the Lord on this community. (There likely were over 750 in attendance.) I moved slowly through the crowd, meeting friends of yesteryear, noting how well they still looked, or, sadly, how they had aged and deteriorated. But the joy of seeing each other again expressed itself in a lot of enthusiastic greeting, and hugging all around. That was different; there was no hugging in the old days, picnic or no picnic. So some things have improved.

After an hour of meeting and greeting and after singing O Canada, we were called to prayer, after which we enjoyed the abundance of the good earth. Food was everywhere. It was always so at the church picnic.

The afternoon program included the usual races and games for all ages, with the laughter and screaming of enthusiastic little kids and vigorous youth, and adults reliving their glory days. It reminded me of the time when some of the farmers had only two sets of clothing – their farm overalls and their Sunday best. Some wore their best to the picnic, felt hats included.

After the scrumptious lunch under a large tent, I found a wonderfully comfortable folding-chair and a shady spot under a tree. Since I have very limited mobility and little breathing capacity, all day I was suitably pampered and ministered to by my good relatives. And it was the perfect setting for gathering round and catching up on the years that have slipped by.

In view of the historic occasion, the organizers made a special effort to connect with the past. So the picnickers, especially the women, were encouraged to dress in the style of the old days. There were some neat costumes and headdresses. The men joined in with the beard-growing contest. This tied in nicely with Alberta's celebration of its 100th anniversary as a province which happens to coincide with the Canadian CRC's 100th anniversary. Beard-growing seems to be essential to such remembrances.

The beards were impressive. The contest was set up with several different categories – longest, fullest, trimmest, and most unique. Also the youngest and the oldest "beard." Everything except the scruffiest. So the honors were shared by several contenders. I was struck by the beauty of a few well-tended beards. Amazing what six months of tender loving care can produce in the sun and wind in Southern Alberta.

I caught up on a lot of news, of course, but I also got into the mind and mentality of the prairie people They are not all cut out of the same cloth, but the prevailing spirit is not at all appreciative of what the federal government is doing. Albertans have no appreciation for the Liberals in Ottawa. I seriously doubt that you could have found one person at that picnic who has voted Liberal in the last decade. If there was one he likely would not admit it to anyone.

*Games are a fun part of any church picnic.*

And these rurals are very well informed. One businessman-farmer in particular keeps abreast of all things political by an avid reading of *The Western Standard*, a magazine with a definite Catholic-Christian approach to the serious business of political analysis. He is aware that people from other parts look at his kind as rednecks, but that doesn't faze him. He and all the others like him deplore the loss of solid tradition in the sweeping impact of multiculturalism and political correctness in Canadian life and culture.

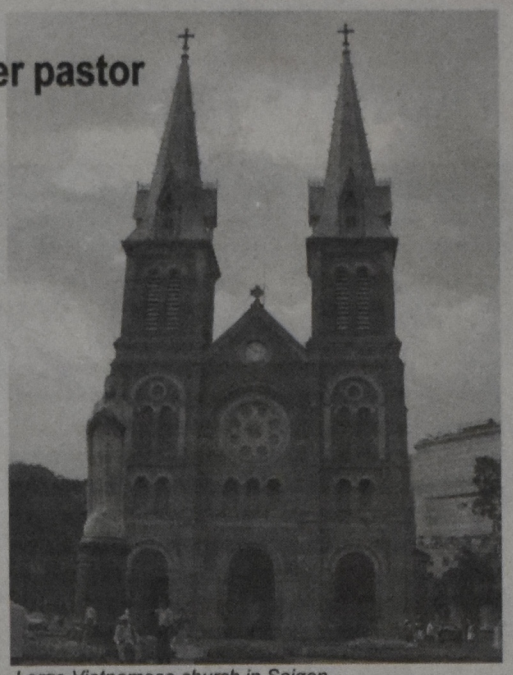
And there were people who were very angry about the fiasco of the Calvin "professors" who protested the visit of President Bush as Calvin's graduation speaker. "They should all be fired," said one. This was particularly true of some of the Americans in attendance. But by this time the issue has largely passed on. I can't help but believe that the "professors" should do a reality check with the people out west, who have a vested interest in Calvin College though it is almost a continent away from where they live.

The emphasis on the historical also came through when Dr. Don Sinnema of Trinity Christian College got the first look at his new monograph, *The First Dutch Settlement in Alberta*. A whole box of them arrived right there on the picnic grounds. Though it wasn't an item on the program, he did a brisk business selling his new book. It has recorded the story of the early pioneers from correspondents in the area to Dutch language publications in the U.S. and in the Netherlands. You may contact him at <Don.Sinnema@trnty.edu> to purchase a copy.

One aspect of the old picnics I missed was the 5-cent ice cream cone and the nickel-bottle of Orange Crush and chocolate bars at the same price. That was how we spent our quarters back in the Depression – five treats for a whole day. Then, as now, we had a great celebration.

*Ty Hofman is a Yankee-Canuck and retired minister of the Christian Reformed Church, living in Grand Rapids, MI*

## Vietnamese authorities offer pastor freedom for confession



*Large Vietnamese church in Saigon*

HO CHI MINH CITY (Compass) – The Rev. Nguyen Hong Quang was working at a labor camp machine used to extract cashew nuts on August 9 when he was approached by high prison officials. They told him he would be moved immediately to another prison.

With no further explanation or time to prepare to leave, Rev. Quang was bundled into a comfortable staff car and driven with guards to a prison about 250 kilometers south of the Dak Lak prison camp where he had been held. He was not allowed to retrieve even his Bible.

Rev. Quang soon discovered the reason for this sudden transfer. Shortly after his arrival at the fifth prison since his arrest on June 8, 2004, officials indicated to Rev. Quang that he could be set free in connection with Vietnam's traditional amnesty on the September 2 National Day. All he need do, they said, is sign a paper agreeing that he was guilty of the charges on which he had been tried and convicted.

Rev. Quang, who has maintained his innocence from the outset, told officials at the Dong Nai province prison that he would not change his position and admit to guilt now.

The pastor and five other Mennonite workers were arrested at various times between March and June 2004 in connection with an incident on March 2, 2004, when Rev. Quang confronted two plainclothes policemen who had harassed some of the workers and were staking out his home and church. The six Mennonites were convicted in a joint trial on November 12, 2004, and sentenced to various jail terms for "interfering with officers doing their duty."

Rev. Quang's lawyer, Nguyen Van Dai, presented what many considered a brilliant defense in an appeal to the People's Supreme Court in April 2005. But Rev. Quang was overruled and his three-year sentence upheld.

The Mennonite prisoners, including a young woman, Le Thi Hong Lien, were subjected to harsh treatment in an attempt to make them accuse and betray Rev. Quang. Earlier this year, authorities released Lien during the April 30 Liberation Day amnesty, two months before the end of her sentence. Reports of the torture that resulted in her mental breakdown led to a wide international advocacy campaign. Lien was transferred to a mental hospital to allow for at least partial rehabilitation before she received the amnesty.

She also was pressured to sign an admission of guilt; she also refused.

"We find it interesting that Vietnamese authorities are so intent on getting Pastor Quang to admit guilt – they have already declared him guilty," a Vietnamese church leader told Compass. "We pray earnestly that he will be released anyway and be reunited with his wife and children and his church."

The international advocacy around the Mennonite prisoners has caused major embarrassment for the Vietnamese government at a time it is urgently trying to show the world a kinder face in its treatment of religious groups. According to house church leaders and ethnic minority Christians in Vietnam, recent legislative measures on religion have not resulted in noticeable improvements.

No church organization has yet achieved legal registration, and church leaders have documented many ongoing attempts to force Christians to give up their faith.

In early September, the U.S. Department of State will announce whether Vietnam will again be named a Country of Particular Concern (CPC), the worst category of human rights offenders. In May, the U.S. administration announced that it had signed an agreement with Vietnam – a secret exchange of letters how Vietnam could escape the CPC designation. Vietnam urgently needs removal of the CPC designation in order to obtain trouble-free trade with the United States, as well as for U. S. support for accession to the World Trade Organization.

"Failure to show improvement in the area of religious freedom and other human rights, at the very time Vietnam has promulgated legislation and is trumpeting improvements, should be worri-some to the world community relating to Vietnam," a Compass Vietnam source observed. "Either the new legislation is a just a sham for public relations, as many religious leaders believe, or Vietnam's central government lacks the authority to direct its local officials."

*Small Vietnamese church*

## Nigerian president urges African churches: Play part in governance

**Obed Minchakpu**

Abuja, 16 August (ENI) – Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo has urged African church leaders to become key players in the process of achieving good governance in the continent.

"The Church must be a critical partner in the on-going efforts at strengthening the structures of democratic governance, and bringing about sustained development in an environment of justice, equity, and fairness," Obasanjo told leaders at a meeting of the Nairobi-based All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) on August 8.

He noted the Church had played an historic role in advocating the rights of Africans and as a catalyst for democratization. But, he said it still has an important role to play in political and economic reform and in helping rid Africa of the problems that have vexed its people.

"The Church in Africa must not only lend its weighty support to the reform process, but it should buy into it and become a major advocate and prime driver of the process," Obasanjo told members of the AACC's general committee, its governing body, meeting in Abuja.

The Nigerian leader noted, "The challenges confronting the nations of Africa today are so grave that it is spiritually incumbent on every fully functional Christian to be part of the regenerative process, which the reform agenda in many African countries today represents."

Key issues related to the reform of African governance and the revitalization of the continent's economy are the HIV/AIDS pandemic, African Union initiatives for transparent and fair governance and the success of the New Partnership for African Development, a strategic partnership for the continent's development, said Obasanjo.

The Rev. Mvume Dandala, the African church grouping's general secretary, responding to Obasanjo's challenge, said his call fits into the AACC's vision for revitalising the role of churches. "As the ecumenical family, we inherit a long legacy of successful struggle for liberation against colonialism, apartheid, and other methods of oppression," said Dandala.

He added: "As communities of faith, we have the capacity to build a better Africa, not only by preaching a Gospel of justice and transformation, but by partnering with governments and other institutions across the continent to make sure that even 'the least of these', as Jesus called them, will reap the benefits of reform and revitalization."

The AACC represents more than 100 million Christians in 39 African countries.

## Sri Lanka: Anti-Christian belligerence rewarded

**Elizabeth Kendal**

In Sri Lanka, a local Head Quarters Inspector has banned a small Christian fellowship from meeting for worship or prayer on the grounds that aggressive, threatening Buddhist opposition to its presence led to a disturbance of the peace.

On Saturday August 6, 2005, the pastor of the Foursquare Gospel Church in Horana, Kalutara District, Sri Lanka, was informed that the mob which interrupted worship and harassed believers the week before was planning a repeat attack on the following Sunday, August 7. On the basis of this information, a request was made for police protection.

On Sunday, the mob of around 50 persons led by a Buddhist monk arrived at the church and demanded amidst threats that the believers (about 12 in number) cease their meetings, leave the church and not return.

No police protection had arrived, so the pastor once again called the police station, this time to request police intervention. The police called both parties to the police station to resolve the matter.

The Buddhists claimed that the Christians have no right to meet for worship in a village that is 99 percent Buddhist. Various unsubstantiated accusations were leveled against the Christians.

The police accepted that the Christians have a constitutional right to religious freedom, which entitles them to meet and practise their faith. However, the Head Quarters Inspector (HQI) ordered the pastor and his congregation to stop meeting for Christian worship, with immediate effect, on the grounds that their Christian worship has led to a situation where it has caused a disturbance of the peace.

The church has also been instructed not to try and relocate. Hence the members of the Foursquare Gospel Church in Horana have in effect been banned from meeting for worship and prayer.

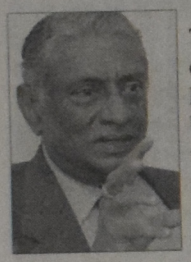
This unconstitutional, unjust and arbitrary ruling is pure appeasement. Impunity equals permission, and appeasement leads to escalation. Unless it is overturned, this ruling will bolster the confidence of Sri Lanka's Buddhist militants with the hope that unlawful, anti-Christian belligerence will be rewarded rather than prosecuted.

*Elizabeth Kendal is Principal Researcher and Writer for the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty News & Analysis.*

# Churches fret about impact of Sri Lankan foreign minister's killing

**Anto Akkara**

New Delhi (ENI) – Churches in Sri Lanka have joined in the condemnation of the assassination of their country's foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar and expressed apprehension about the impact of the killing on a fragile peace process.



Kadirgamar, a Tamil Christian educated as a lawyer at Oxford University, was given a state funeral in Colombo on August 15. He was shot dead by a sniper firing a sophisticated rifle from a neighboring residence 300 metres away on the night of August 12.

"The country has a lost a courageous leader at a time when it needs the services of such men," lamented Sri Lanka's National Christian Council in a statement on 16 August.

The NCC, a grouping of eight Protestant denominations on the island, described the assassination as "a shock to all right thinking people" and noted that "all peace loving people of this country are apprehensive about a return to war in the present climate".

Following Kadirgamar's assassination, several Sinhala nationalist groups called for an end to the fragile ceasefire with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), which is widely suspected to be behind the assassination. Kadirgamar, although a Tamil, was on a hit-list of the rebels for his bitter opposition to their violent separatist campaign.

The Tamil Tigers have been accused of carrying out several high profile assassinations including that of former president Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993 during its bloody campaign, launched in 1983, to gain autonomy for ethnic Tamil majority areas in the north and east.

Though the rebel group quickly denied any role in Kadirgamar's assassination, the government rejected the Tamil Tigers' claim saying all the evidence pointed to the LTTE being behind the killing, which further endangers a fragile peace process.

"The assassination is an affront to those who preach and promote a negotiated political settlement to the ethnic conflict," Sri Lanka's Roman Catholic Bishops Conference lamented. They said the assassination was "outrageous" and a "heinous blow" to the peace process. Last week, three Catholic bishops of Tamil areas under LTTE had appealed at a meeting with Tamil Tiger leaders for the rebels to honor the ceasefire, due to increasing skirmishes in the Tamil controlled areas.

Prior to the Norwegian-brokered ceasefire in 2002, the civil war claimed more than 65,000 lives besides displacing nearly two million in the Buddhist majority nation. While the Sinhalese account for nearly 70 per cent of the island's 19 million people, ethnic Tamils account for some 17 per cent. Christians and Muslims make up 13 per cent of the population.

Anglican bishop of Colombo Duleep de Chickera said the assassination was "only the latest in a long line of ethnic Tamils who have been assassinated because they took a position different from that of their assassins." The bishops' appeal followed the lynching of the police chief of the northern city of Jaffna and of several other shootings.

# Religious conflicts displace one million in Nigeria says legislator

**Obed Minchakpu**

Bauchi, Nigeria (ENI) – The Human Rights Committee of Nigeria's lower legislative chamber, the House of Representatives, says that more than a million people have been displaced due to religious conflicts that have engulfed the country in the past five years.

Abdul Oroh, deputy chairperson of the committee made the disclosure to journalists in the city of Bauchi, northern Nigeria, on August 8 when members of the body visited refugee camps housing displaced persons in the states of Plateau, Bauchi, and Nasarawa.

"We counted all the displaced persons in the various camps in the country," said Oroh, noting that the statistics on the number of displaced people was arrived at after committee visits were used to compile the data. He said federal funds for dealing with the situation were woefully short.

Violence seen as triggered by religious tensions, especially between Muslims and Christians in the northern part of Nigeria, has recurred increasingly following implementation of the Islamic legal system, Sharia, from the year 2000 by some Islamic leaders in the region.

The 12 northern Nigerian states are currently implementing the Islamic legal system, eliciting tension between Muslims and Christians.

Since the implementation of the Islamic legal system, Alhaji Abubakar Rimi, Nigeria's former minister of communications has said in the national capital of Abuja, that more than half a million people had been killed up until 2003 in religious conflicts in the country.

Leaders of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) have frequently protested to the government that the Islamic legal system has resulted in the persecution of Christians. They say it has also led to the destruction of churches and the banning of the building of new ones.

Christians in the states of Adamawa, Zamfara, Kaduna, Plateau and Kano have said they have been afflicted by the tensions. In Kaduna, the Rev. Joseph Hayap, a Baptist minister, and the secretary of CAN in Kaduna state told Ecumenical News International that more than 10,000 people have been killed in these religious conflicts, "the majority are Christians".

Anglican Bishop Benjamin Kwashi in the city of Jos, told ENI that Christians also killed in religious conflicts in Plateau state in the past four years numbered more than 10,000.

"This is in Plateau State which is not an Islamic state," he noted. "Christians constitute well over 90 per cent of the state's population, yet, the state has been under constant attack from Muslim militants in the past four years."

Of Nigeria's 128 million people 50 per cent are estimated to be Muslims, while Christians account for 40 per cent.

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■ Connecting with other pastors
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# Eggs 'eggs-plained'

My breakfast always includes an egg. I love eggs, especially a soft-boiled one on bread. Whether it's soft-boiled or hard-boiled, fried with sunny side up, scrambled, poached or omelettes this column is a tribute to – you guessed it – the egg. As I go on to 'eggs-plain' the ins and outs of eggs, I'm sure you'll find that this is 'eggs-actly' a timely column. Eggs are good on a hot day.

We had numerous people come into the restaurant during those very hot days in July, at noon, and ordered breakfast – with one or two eggs. They said that's all they felt like eating. We served lunch and breakfast at noon and later – something we seldom do.

It's a topic I haven't written about since eggs had to be graded in order to have them sold in corner stores and farmer's markets. And that was way back in the early 1990's.

This spring I converted a small block building on the farm into a henhouse and bought 25 ready-to-lay brown pullets. It's been 30 years since we had hens on the farm.

One of the first chores I do in the morning is to feed and water the hens and gather the eggs – usually 23, 24 or 25 a day. They lay eggs in the nesting boxes I built. Most of the eggs are laid early morning. The hens are very content, wandering all over the sawdust floor, and at night they roost on wooden poles. No caged hens here! I've got a few egg customers and they love the fresh big eggs.

**Here's a little egg trivia:**

Europe has had domesticated hens since 600 B.C.

Chickens came to the New World with Columbus on his second trip in 1493.

Eggs were colored, blessed, exchanged and eaten as part of spring long before Christian times.

While it is customary to throw rice at weddings in many countries, French brides break an egg on the threshold of their new home before stepping in – for luck and healthy babies.

About 280 million laying hens produce some 60 billion eggs each year in the United States.

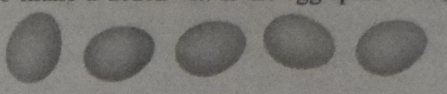
There are now 200 breeds of chickens.

Hens with white feathers and ear lobes produce white-shelled eggs. Hens with red feathers and red ear lobes produce brown-shelled eggs. There is no difference in taste or nutrition between white and brown eggs. However, I'm sure most people prefer brown eggs.

An average hen lays 300 to 325 eggs a year. A hen starts laying eggs at 19 weeks of age.

After the First World War, the Canadian agriculture department sponsored an egg-laying contest to stimulate poultry flock performance. A Canadian champion hen produced a world record 351 eggs in a single year.

A lot goes into an egg. The hen must eat four pounds of feed to make a dozen eggs.



To produce one egg, it takes a hen 24-26 hours, and to do so, she requires five oz. of food and 10 oz. of water. Thirty minutes later she starts all over again.

Occasionally, a hen will produce double-yolked eggs throughout her egg-laying career. It is rare, but not unusual, for a young hen to produce an egg with no yolk at all.

Artificial color additives are not permitted in chicken feed. Yolk color depends on the diet of the hen. Feed containing corn produces medium yellow yolks while feed containing wheat or barley produces lighter color yolks.

As the hen grows older she produces larger eggs.

Did you know that a mother hen turns her egg about 50 times per day so the yolk won't stick to the sides of the shell?

Eggs age more in one day at room temperature than in one week in the refrigerator.

Eggs can be kept refrigerated in their carton for at least four to five weeks beyond the pack date.

A hard-boiled egg will peel more easily if it is a week or two old before boiling. To tell if an egg is raw or hard-boiled, spin it! If the egg spins easily, it is hard-boiled but if it wobbles, it is raw.

Eggs contain the highest quality protein you can buy. Egg protein has just the right mix of essential amino acids needed by humans to build tissues. In addition, eggs have 13 essential vitamins and minerals.

Eggs contain the highest quality protein known. It is second only to mother's milk for human nutrition.

Now about that riddle. Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Legend has it that the egg came first and was laid by the Easter Bunny. Eggs-actly!

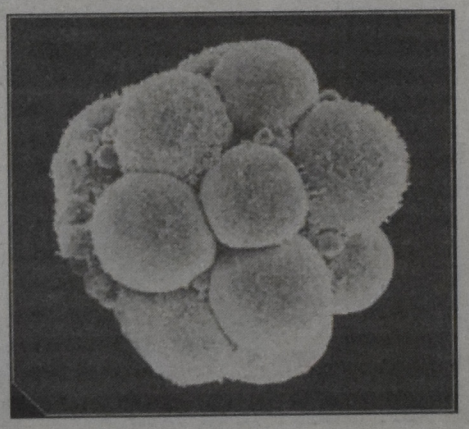
*Maynard van der Galien is a farmer and owns and operates the Old Towne Hall Restaurant and Tea Room in Renfrew, Ont. Quiches – four different kinds – made in the restaurant, are very popular with women at lunch time. Many eggs are used in making the quiches.*

# The stem cell debate

**Michelle Kirtley**

Earlier this year, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation authorizing the federal government to fund research on new human embryonic stem cell lines. Senate advocates, emboldened by the public support of Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN), are pressing for adoption of a similar measure in the Senate. These advocates insist that embryonic stem cells hold the "best hope" for curing a plethora of human ailments. But President Bush has pledged to veto any bill that authorizes the use of "taxpayers' money to promote science which destroys life in order to save life." And so a battle line has been drawn.

Out of the fray, a few ambitious peacemakers have proposed an alternative approach – other sources of "embryonic-like" stem cells that do not require the destruction of the human embryo. Oddly enough, instead of welcoming the compromise, some embryonic stem cell advocates have criticized these proposals, calling them ethically suspect and scientifically speculative. The hypocrisy here borders on the absurd considering that these exact arguments have been leveled against embryonic stem cell research.



The alternative proposals were carefully reviewed by the U.S. president's Council on Bioethics and have been incorporated into legislative initiatives on Capitol Hill. Their aim is to encourage researchers to explore the purported potential of embryonic stem cell research within appropriate moral constraints. The proposed alternatives have not yet been successful, and much work remains to prove that the methods do not, in fact, harm the human embryo. Nonetheless, the proposals represent a sincere attempt to reconcile opponents in a morally divisive area of public policy.

In dismissing these alternative proposals out of hand, staunch embryonic stem cell advocates are rejecting the role of the federal government in setting moral boundaries on scientific progress. Although their arguments often sound moral and sympathetic, their primary goal is securing government protection and funding for research free from moral constraint.

Nobel Laureate Paul Berg, one of the most vocal critics of these "alternative proposals," recently stated that his "principal concern" is that "theological and ideological pronouncements" will become the standard for what is scientifically permissible. He goes so far as to argue that "the freedom to conduct scientific inquiry is inherent in the right to free speech granted in the Constitution's Bill of Rights" (*San Francisco Business Times*, 5/9/05).

However, knowing that this vision of untrammeled science is not palatable to most Americans, the standard-bearers for scientific freedom have attacked these alternative proposals on other grounds. In a July 19 op-ed piece in *The Washington Post*, Berg and his colleagues argued that some of the alternative proposals raise "ethical concerns as to possible damage that might be inflicted on the embryo." Yet these same authors have publicly supported the special creation and destruction of human embryos solely for research. In the op-ed they criticize the alternative proposals as "dubious," "unproven," and "speculative," though the same can be said of their research. They argue that "there is no scientific evidence that [these stem cells] would be... Safe for human therapies" when scientists have widely admitted that human embryonic stem cells form tumors and become genetically unstable.

Such blatant hypocrisy reveals a deliberate abdication of moral responsibility. As C. S. Lewis noted, "what we call Man's power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument." Elected officials and scientists alike should reject utilitarianism, however disguised, and insist on debating complex bioethical issues in terms that are clear and honest, both morally and scientifically.

*Michelle Kirtley, Ph.D. is on the staff of U.S. Congressman Dave Weldon, M.D. (R-FL)*

*This Commentary appeared in* Capital Commentary, *A Publication of The Center for Public Justice, August 8, 2005. It is online at: http://www.cpjustice.org/stories/storyReader$1319*

# Back-to-school shopping

**Lisa M. Petsche**

Kids aren't the only ones who may be experiencing the back-to-school blues right now. Parents, after all, are the ones who must finance most, if not all, of the clothing, footwear, school supplies and electronics on students' lengthy shopping lists.

The Centre for a New American Dream (CNAD) – a non-profit organization dedicated to raising public awareness of the hidden costs of uninformed and excessive consumption – is urging us to be "conscientious consumers in the midst of this retail hey-day," concerned with protecting the environment, enhancing quality of life and promoting social justice.

Here are some tips on how to go about this. (If your family's back-to-school shopping blitz is already over, keep these in mind for future needs).

- Help each child to take inventory of what she has, then develop a shopping list of essentials. Distinguish between needs and wants.
- Re-use whatever you can, cleaning and repairing as necessary.
- Donate no longer needed items to a charity that can reuse or recycle them.
- Set a budget. Provide younger children with choices to help them learn about managing money. Consider buying older kids essential school supplies and giving them a fixed amount of money to cover everything else. If they want something expensive, they can make trade-offs or contribute their own cash.
- Don't buy things your kids don't need. Or, set only a small allowance for non-essentials.
- Discourage purchasing trendy items that can quickly become outdated.
- Buy quality products and instruct your kids on their proper care.

The CNAD's suggestions for selecting school supplies include: buy paper products with the highest possible percentage of post-consumer waste (PWC); buy locally manufactured goods; avoid excess packaging; avoid products – such as rulers, pencil cases, binders and backpacks – containing toxic polyvinyl chloride (PVC); and buy energy efficient products, from light bulbs to computers. Visit www.shopbacktoschool.org for a buying guide, online merchant links and tips for getting retailers and school administrators to "make better choices when they stock and buy supplies."

When it comes to supplying food for the school day, rise to the challenge of preparing "litterless" lunches and snacks, with reusable boxes or bags, reusable food storage and drink containers, stainless steel cutlery (buy extras at a thrift store) and cloth napkins. Purchase larger sizes of foods such as yogurt, applesauce, cheese, crackers and juice to portion into containers. (Bonus: this costs less than enticingly convenient single-serving meals, snack foods and drinks.) Use locally grown produce whenever possible.

If time is a concern, have your kids help prepare their lunch in the evening. They can also be responsible for emptying their lunch bag after school, and perhaps washing containers.

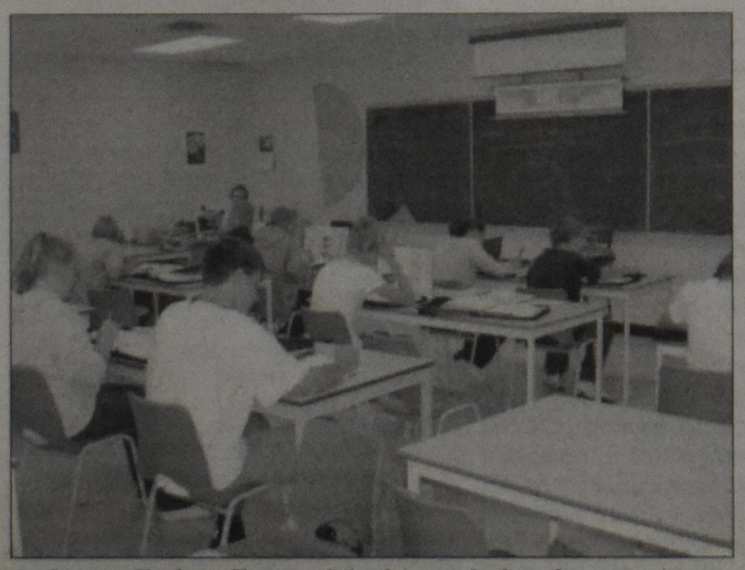
Instruct your kids to bring home anything recyclable (be sure they know what falls into this category) that can't be deposited at school. Encourage the school to initiate a recycling program if they don't yet have one, advocate for a composting program for organic lunch waste or suggest a litterless lunch campaign.

With clothing, buy pre-owned items as much as possible. This resource-conserving – and of course budget-friendly – practice works well for younger kids. Second-hand sources include thrift stores, consignment shops, yard sales and parent-to-parent sales.

When buying new, among other things the CNAD recommends seeking out sweatshop-free clothing. You're not likely to find it at your local mall, however. According to the Toronto-based Maquila Solidarity Network, in order for that to happen "there will need to be increased pressure on apparel industry giants to eliminate sweatshop abuses throughout their global supply chains." Check out www.maquilasolidarity.org to learn how to help.

Given that back-to-school season is one of the biggest retail seasons of the year, there's no better time to start putting our money where our values are.

*Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three, social worker and freelance journalist with a special interest in environmental and social justice issues.*



*Students in Chatham Christian School (www.chathamchristian.ca)*

# Empowerment

**BuildingTrust**
**Vicky Van Andel Ed.**

**Vicky Van Andel**

*A boy playing in the fields got stung by a nettle. He ran home to his mother, telling her that he had but touched that nasty weed, and it had stung him. "It was just your touching it, my boy," said the mother, "that caused it to sting you; the next time you meddle with a nettle, grasp it tightly, and it will do you no hurt." Do boldly what you do at all.*

*Aesop Fables, 6th Century B.C.*

All around the world groups of women are finding courage to speak out on issues of justice. Recently *The Edmonton Journal (July 31, 2005)* carried a story entitled: *It took a village to give them hope* about a group of homeless women in Kenya who built an all female village about 300 kilometers north of Nairobi. They named it Umoja meaning unity. The women had been raped and discarded by their husbands for bringing shame to the community. So they went away and built themselves a village of mud and dung huts, in a symbolic circle. Men were banned from entering the village. The women set up a successful tourism business and they flourished. The men constructed a village right across the street, also started a tourism business and it failed.

The story made headlines in the country. This past year the United Nations invited Rebecca Lolosoli, the matriarch of the women's village, to speak at its world conference. She spoke on gender empowerment. The men across the street did not like this. "She is a trouble maker and questions our very culture. The man is the head and the lady is the neck. A man cannot take advice from his neck." Upon Rebecca's return from the conference armed with empowerment training workbooks, the men threw stones at her. But Rebecca ignored them. She said that after everything, they cannot stop us.

The same *Journal* article tells of other African women who are speaking out on the cultural norms in their countries that are oppressive. These women want many gender issues addressed such as: a woman's right to refuse a marriage proposal, policies on sexual harassment, prevention of genital mutilation, women representation in politics, and legal rights when their husbands take a second wife.

Canada has its own examples of strong women. Recently nine Roman Catholic women, surrounded by sisters in the faith were ordained in a ceremony they organized themselves. It was a bold step risking ex-communication from the church. The ceremony took place in the Thousand Islands of Ontario. Four women became priests and five deacons. The women believe that the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church forbidding women to be priests is unjust. "Each of us has our own individual calling, and collectively we are called to make the statement that women are full human beings and therefore entitled to the priesthood as well as men." Theologian Pauline Jacob, who is writing a doctoral thesis on the religious vocation of women, attended the ceremony. She stated that "while this ordination ceremony may appear like a provocation it is not our goal, it is a result of a long progression."

*Yours in Strength and Beauty* is a non-profit organization in Alberta for aboriginal women "dedicated to their own promotion, improvement and self-fulfillment within the concept of self-government and their own community." Muriel Stanley Venne the founder of this group states that the goal of the organization is that aboriginal women be recognized for their accomplishments, their strength and beauty. "Over the years, aboriginal women have suffered discrimination and oppression but they have endured and are now emerging as a powerful force in their own communities and at the provincial and federal levels."

A *knowing* that results from being silenced or devalued motivates women to step out and claim a voice. This knowing comes from the heart. Talking about it takes strength and courage. Fear is a very real barrier. Claiming a voice is often misunderstood as being aggressive. It can also upset relationships, for a while. In the end, however, injustice cannot be ignored. Hearts have a way of needing to tell the truth. The sting of the nettle becomes unbearable and the nettle must be grabbed tight. In the words of Nelly McClung: "power (self-power) must be claimed, it is never given."

*What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*

*Micah 6:8*

*Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via fax at 1-780-473-0970, or e-mail at: vickyv@telus.net*

**Creation**

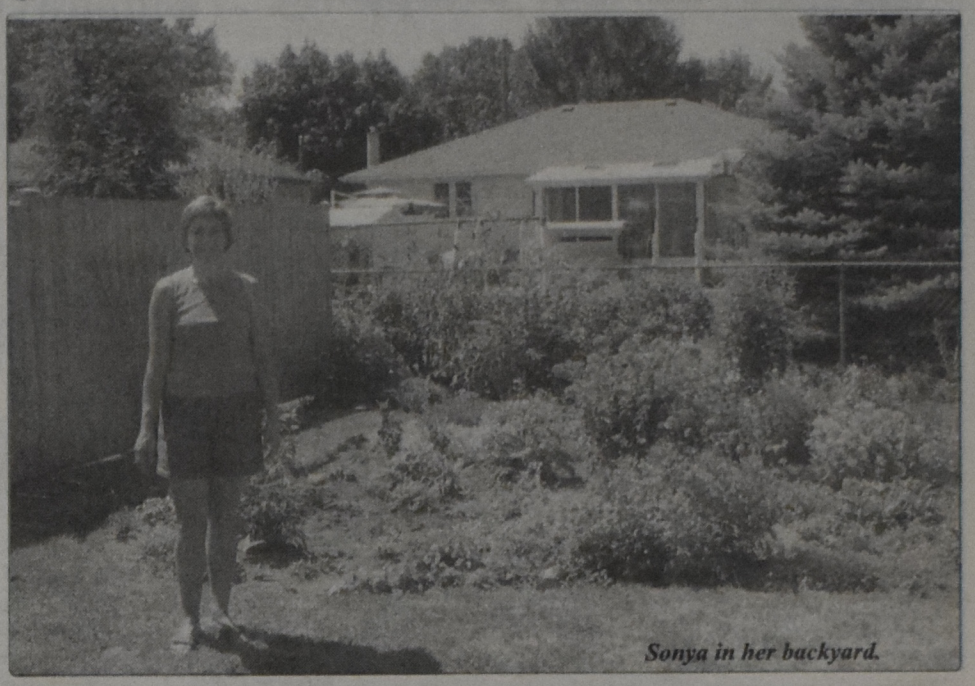
# *Reflections on my summer gardens – past and present*

**Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

When I met Augusta, a character in Gail Anderson-Dargatz's novel *A Recipe for Bees*, I identified with her instantly when her passion for gardening became evident. Augusta moves with her husband into his family homestead and plants a garden in the weed-infested, parched soil. Her father-in-law, Olaf – a miserable, bitter man – thinks her attempts are a senseless waste of time, and tells her: "Flowers aren't good for anything." But Augusta is wiser than the pragmatic, hard-boiled codger, and knows that he is wrong. About Augusta, the author writes, "The garden filled her, extended her, made her more than she was without it" (Alfred A. Knopf, 1998, pp.94).

My garden does the same for me. It also provides a place for me to celebrate my political freedom, to work through my emotions, to experience sanctuary, and to build relationships.

I never thought about the fact that my garden is a place to celebrate the political freedom Canada offers until several years ago when I read the historical novel, *When My Name Was Keoko* by Linda Sue Park. In 1940 when the Japanese occupied Korea, Keoko and her family – along with all Koreans – were ordered to dig up shoots and saplings from around their cherry trees, and present them at police headquarters. Despite the official explanation that the Japanese wanted to beautify Korea, Keoko immediately understood the true motivation underlying the order. The cherry tree was Japan's national symbol; by increasing its numbers and visibility, the Japanese were proclaiming their domination and attempting to break the Koreans' spirits.



*Sonya in her backyard.*

The government order included one more command. Even more distressing, all Koreans were told to dig up and burn rose of Sharon trees – their national tree. In a moving scene, Keoko relates how her mother, saddened by the order, goes into the house while Keoko's brother chops down their rose of Sharon trees. When he reaches the last one – a small tree that had recently been planted – Keoko's mother runs outside and tells him to fetch a big pot. Soon mother, brother, and sister are digging up the rose of Sharon tree. They prune it to a manageable size, plant it in a large pot, and hide it in the workshop beneath sacks and straw baskets. When the tree is safely hidden, Keoko shudders to think of the punishment the enemy will mete out if their act of rebellion is discovered.

In the following days, Keoko notices that her mother takes better care of the little tree than she does of the rest of the garden. One day she hears her mother say to the tree, "The time will come when you will be free to grow in a place of honor. I will see that you live until then – that is a promise" (Clarion Books, 2002, pp. 35).

When I work in my garden and enjoy its beauty, I am aware that no one forces me for political reasons to grow maple, walnut, birch, or any other kind of tree. No one – threatening my life – commands me to destroy oak, poplar, or lilac trees. I am free to grow what I want to, with no repercussions.

Even though I love gardening for all the right reasons and for the positive benefits it provides – good exercise, relaxation for the mind and spirit, beauty for others and me to enjoy, and a habitat for birds, butterflies, and insects – one of my gardens originated for a negative reason. In one of the neighborhoods in which we lived, the family next to us was very difficult to get along with. Despite all our best efforts – and those of several other families on our street – this family caused much strife. Feeling hurt, angry, and frustrated, I decided to build a garden-wall in my backyard so that I could have a protective barrier from this distressing situation.

Did I naively expect to plant seeds that would produce Jack-in-the-beanstalk-type plants – ones that would sprout beyond my wildest dreams, creating an instant, full-blown, leafy wall? Did I plan to purchase bottles of fertilizer and overfeed my plants so that a wall stretched, inflated, and magnified till I could no longer see into the neighbor's yard? Of course not! I knew it would take time for my garden-wall to grow.

Once I got the idea, there was no stopping me. That's when the real work started. When I began to dig out the sods, I discovered that the ground was rock-hard clay, not moist, easily-dislodged soil conducive to a fertile garden. Despite this realization, the vision of the garden-wall spurred me on. Fourteen times I filled my wheelbarrow with clay, and deposited it wherever I could find a spot – behind the air conditioner, beside the house, behind the raspberry bushes. Then I hoisted and heaved twenty wheelbarrows filled with rich, composted soil into the vacant trough. I planted perennials that would grow tall – pink phlox, purple monkshood, butterfly bushes, pink echinacea, and yellow gloriosa daisies. Later, I bought several shrubs to fill in the spaces between the perennials.

I'd like to say that over time the relationship with the neighboring family healed in answer to my fervent prayers. It didn't. I wish I could report that the garden grew as prolifically in reality as it did in my imagination. It didn't become the wall I had hoped for. But God worked wonders even as I flailed about in my frailty, seeking solutions. The garden became a satisfying place of creativity, beauty, and color in an ugly emotional environment.

Despite that negative experience, I still equate gardens with places of sanctuary. So did Marjorie, a character in the juvenile novel, *Girl in a Cage*, by Jane Yolen and Robert Harris. The daughter of Robert the Bruce – King of Scotland in 1306 – Marjorie is taken from her home in Lochmaben by English forces and placed in a cage in an English town, where residents throw rotten fruit, stones, and excrement at her. While caged, she thinks, "Surely I do not deserve this . . . All I ever wanted to do was to read and ride and hawk and dance and play in the gardens at Lochmaben" (Philomel Books, 2002, pp. 4-5). Marjorie is eventually released and placed in an English convent. While there, she is not allowed to ask about the welfare of her father and Scotland. If she complies with this order, she will be permitted to roam the convent grounds. Marjorie says, "The thought of being able to walk in the orchard and gardens after those weeks in the cage made me keep my tongue. They became my sanctuary" (pp. 228).

## Creation

# Tra la la la la

**Chris Devinck**

The world can be a sudden place. We can work through our daily routines that spill over into weeks and months, and little happens, but then a quick incident adds an exclamation point to the quiet narrative of our lives.

A few days ago, I drove to the library to return a number of CD's, classical music that I admire, especially Bach's Brandenburg Concertos and Orchestral Suites. As I walked out of the library, I was surprised to see how quickly the skies darkened, and how powerfully the wind suddenly whirled down into the small valley where I live. By the time I reached my side of town, rain, leaves, and small, broken branches were pelting the car's windshield. The temperature dropped twenty degrees. The cold front had arrived.

Just as I stepped into the house, the clouds split open, lightening illuminated the yard, thunder exploded, trees bent back and forth in their wild sway. I looked out the kitchen window, and said to myself how impressed I was that so many twigs and leaves had so quickly covered the back lawn, and then I heard a distinctive crack. I turned my head slightly to my right and witnessed a gigantic branch crashing down on the garden furniture smashing the glass table and shredding the green, cloth umbrella.

I was impressed. The flower boxes were swept upside-down; the lawn chairs were blown to their sides. It was as though a madman rushed through the backyard with vengeance and a club, destroying everything he could touch in twenty-five seconds.

Of course the insurance company will not replace the set because I have a $500.00 deductible. It always amazes me that we can buy insurance that doesn't insure. But I was reminded by this sudden storm to appreciate the calm and stable days. I spend too much time dreaming about the way things could be rather than celebrating what is. Someone recently suggested that I should learn to desire what I have. I am more and more open to accepting the little surprises in my life rather than hoping for grand luck.

So when someone suggested that I go to the racetrack last Saturday, I thought to myself, I've never seen a horse race. I've never placed a single bet anywhere in my life. I'll make my own adventure and break from the routine of my life under my own terms. "Sure," I said to my friends. "I'd like to go to the track."

This track is near the New Jersey shore, one of the oldest, and finest horse track racing arenas in the state. I knew nothing about betting. I learned the difference between two dollars to "show," and two dollars to "place." I liked the sound of the horses tromping down on the track during the race. The sky was blue. The flowers were in full bloom hanging from the stadium, decorating the front concourse. I ate a hot-dog, placed bets on eight of ten races, and left the stadium at the end of the day in the black with $2.60.

Before the seventh race, I was standing in the crowd, checking the program, smiling at the cigar-chewing, hard-core bettors sharing information as I tried to lean over and see if I might pick up some useful information, when one of the race horses right before us on the track reared up, kicking its two front legs high above everyone, the way Roy Roger's horse, Trigger, did on the famous television program. The attendant and jockey, who was not on the horse at the time, held onto the reins, trying to soothe the animal. The horse lowered its legs, stood for a few seconds, than once again, violently reared upward and kicked its legs in the air again and again, and then the horse fell over onto its back, then to its side, and began violently kicking its legs again and again and again, and then all was still. The horse was dead.

Within minutes there was a man with a stethoscope. An animal ambulance arrived. Attendants placed a wide, tall, black curtain in front of the dead animal so that we could not see the horse being dragged into the large truck. There was no announcement, except that the horse had been taken off the roster. No mention of the horse dying. No mention in the newspapers the next day that a race horse had died.

Let's keep it a secret. Let's not smudge the reputation of the race track. Everything is pretty. Flowers are in bloom. Bet your heart out. Have a hot-dog. Tra la la la la.

At the circus of our lives we walk the tightrope. We can balance plates on the tips of long sticks, dangle in the air with an umbrella in our hands maintaining our equilibrium against the fall. We can feel confident, but then the line breaks, or the fear sets in and we tumble down, down, down to the net, if there is a net and regain our composure.

The sudden branch crashing, the horse in death throes – little hints of a grievous world, victims to natural disasters and sudden death. We send people into space, ignore the hungry, wage war, pay the bills, eat chocolate doughnuts.

I could be a pirate, or a famous writer, or an ordinary man who bets on horses, and cleans up the back yard after a storm. Tra la la la la.

## My summer gardens...*continued from p. 12*

Like Marjorie, in my garden-sanctuary I remember the "cages" in my life. It is there that I meet with God in the early morning. I usually begin by looking around me. Seeing the steady rhythm of God's creation slows me down and frees me from the cage of harried rushing that can so quickly overtake me. Viewing the variety of foliage, birds, and insects frees me from the cage of blandness and banality that sometimes dulls my appreciation of life's intrinsic wonder. Focusing on the fascinating miracle of sprouting seeds frees me from the cage of spiritual discouragement by helping me to fathom the Holy Spirit's persistent work of planting seeds of faith in my heart.

Not only does my relationship to God grow in my garden-sanctuary, so do other relationships. That's been especially evident to me as I've watched my husband's friendship with Frank develop. He's a 44-year-old mentally challenged man who lives on our street. When Frank sees Rinke outside, he comes over to chat. Sometimes they stand together looking at the flowers, and Frank tells Rinke which ones he doesn't like. Or, he tells Rinke about his father's garden which, in his estimation, is much lovelier than mine.

One evening Frank dropped by. I had just got up from my lawn chair to go for a walk around the block. Frank lodged himself comfortably in the vacant chair beside Rinke. They chatted as I walked away. When I returned, I found both Rinke and Frank in the vegetable garden, digging up a weedy area. I watched them as they bent their backs to the task, one shovelful at a time, exchanging jokes and laughing together. Our garden provided a place for Frank to feel included in our lives, and gave him an opportunity to make a useful contribution. It wasn't the first time Frank helped us with gardening tasks, and I know it won't be the last.

As I look out over my garden, I'm very thankful that Rinke also appreciates it. That isn't always the case for married couples. Recently, we attended the fiftieth wedding anniversary of a couple in our neighborhood. For the first while we sat with the husband and praised him for his prolific garden – towering bean plants, giant tomato plants, and magnificent raspberry bushes. Later, as I sat beside his wife, I expressed my admiration for their garden. She looked at me with a pinched, pained look on her face, and said in her heavy Italian-accented English, "I don't like it." After a pause, she added, "I tell him, 'When you die, I'm going to chop it all down!' "

### Along A Country Road

Along a country road I take my daily walk
And there I meet no one but God with whom to talk.
I find Him in the promise of a farmer's field
And in the songs of praise the birds above me yield.

In a deep blue sky that's arching overhead
Are His white clouds accompanying my tread,
Depicting the banner of love and grace
That He held over me on all my days.

When I reflect on what is still to be
A new creation and a sinless me,
My heart overflows like a river its banks
With praise, adoration, I render Him thanks.

Didy Prinzen

Ecclesiastes

# *In the end all our efforts are overturned*

**A. A. van Ruler**

*But those who followed were not pleased with the successor.*
Ecclesiastes 4:16b

*Although Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, she was declared illegitimate when Henry had her mother executed. Henry expected a male heir to succeed him and never expected that Elizabeth would be the one to carry on his lineage, which she did with great flair and wisdom.*

In this section the Preacher seems to be talking about an historical event that he himself experienced.

There was an old king who was a fool. He saw everything pertaining to the life of his people through rose-colored glasses. He simply would not listen to warnings and good advice.

Meanwhile, in prison there was a young man who was poor – but wise. He had insight, and he spoke out. He even managed to get the people to support him. Eventually, he got out of prison and seized the throne. The enthusiasm of the masses was boundless. However, the next generation lost that enthusiasm; they were no longer happy with him. In the end, therefore, his life too came to nothing.

Biblical scholars have worn themselves to the bone trying to discover what historical event the Preacher is alluding to here – all in vain. It is altogether possible that the writer is thinking of several different events at the same time, and that he has abstracted certain elements from all of them and combined them into an hypothetical event.

In any case, it is clear what the Preacher means to say. He again directs his light on the thesis that human existence as it is in actuality is vanity or meaningless.

The first thing he sheds light on is the notion that at first the new seems much better than the old. What is strange, however, is that at one time the old too was new. At that time it also seemed better than what came before. But gradually it too became old.

Not just the powers of the flesh deteriorate. This is also true of the life of the spirit. Over the course of a lifetime, values and ideas too lose their luster, just like things. Once again some new thing appears that looks better than that which has grown old.

It arouses enormous enthusiasm among the masses. This, too, is strange, says the Preacher. And this is the second part of his train of thought. Humanity never stops hoping. Although we experience a thousand bitter disappointments, again and again something or somebody arises to waken new hope in us.

That new hope captures our collective soul and so multiplies the power of our enthusiasm. If one man is captivated by something new, this may bring him profound happiness. But few wheels are set in motion thereby. Only when our collective soul is moved so that great masses of people are captivated by something new, something liberating, only then do things begin to happen.

All of a sudden the wind begins to blow from a different direction, and everything bends or is carried away in that direction. Everyone begins to repeat the same things. They throng after the new leader or the new idea.

*I saw that all who lived and walked under the sun followed the youth, the king's successor.*
(4:15)

Of course, there are always a few left who keep their heads and raise objections, who do not immediately see the millennium breaking on the horizon. But they are party-poopers. They are elbowed aside or trampled underfoot. They are not up to date; they don't understand the times. They have no faith; they are reactionaries who prefer to stick with the old.

*However, those who came later were not pleased with him.* This is the Preacher's third point. All of a sudden, the masses are fed up. Soon they will again be captivated by something else, and the one they once followed with cheers will have been abandoned.

But why? The Preacher gives no reason. Often we can't come up with any. We could say that it was because the new generation never experienced some transition that the previous generation had to undergo. It was the energies released by this transition period that motivated the first generation and drove their enthusiasm. The next generation, however, asks itself, puzzled, what in the world the previous generation was so excited about and what in the world they saw in that "new" leader and in that "new" idea. In the meantime, it has all become old hat. The new has become old.

But there's more. In the meantime, we have experienced the new, and it has proved rather disappointing. It is true that young man in jail had been wise. He said new things. He believed in something. He was daring, and he led the way.

When his words and deeds landed on the hard soil of reality, however, they looked very different from the vision he first conceived. All realization, all making real, involves an element of disillusion.

Incarnation is becoming incarnate in the real, becoming flesh. But when things become flesh, they become part of a corrupt reality. This is the heart of the matter: to persevere within this corrupt reality.

This is the faithfulness of true piety. However, this is the last thing we want. By nature we are not ready to truly accept and carry the cross of this fallen and cursed reality.

In addition, the corruption of reality is not just due to this incarnation. Things are not only corrupted by circumstances. After he gets out of jail and ascends to the throne, the young man appears not just to be wise but also all-knowing. However, he turns out to be just another ordinary, fallible and sinful human being. He is a disappointment. This is one reason the masses suddenly drop him and turn to someone else.

Perhaps, though, the Preacher has in mind something even more drastic. What if the sudden shift in popularity simply means that for the masses the fun has gone out of it?

*Those who came later were not pleased with him.* They no longer see anything in him. The fuel of their enthusiasm has all been burnt up and the fire dies all by itself.

There's no deeper reason. It is simply the law of the collective soul, which is very hard to understand. It is something stupid and irrational. One simply accepts it and submits to it. In essential ways, social man is very different from solitary man. As a result, the historical process, the progress of time and all it contains, holds many elements that are very puzzling.

Meanwhile, it seems to me that the Preacher has made an unusually strong argument for his contention that the efforts and toils of man are meaningless, a chasing after wind.

The young man achieved the ultimate: from a jail cell he ascended to the throne. He fired up the masses and carried them away. But then it all came to nothing. Suddenly it is all over. The masses are already marching to a different drummer. And he sits all alone on his throne, growing old.

The deterioration of our powers, the mindless enthusiasms of the masses, the sudden reversal of the people's favor – all of life's paths run dead in a desert. History is nothing but a masquerade.

To plumb to the reality of our existence, we must also get a deep sense of the futility of existence and experience with it. This futility is also at the heart of existence, among other things.

The question is: are we prepared for a reality that often strikes us as futile? Can we persevere inwardly surrounded by this futility and continue to love, just as Jesus persevered in Gethsemane and on Golgotha? This is the question we face every day anew.

# Farmer power

**Elbert van Donkersgoed**

Back in June, I expressed disappointment with the summary of his preparatory consultations on chronically declining farm incomes by Wayne Easter, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. It amounted to a long list of drivers of farm economic decline with no attempt to identify the root causes, followed by an even longer wish list approach to increasing farm income.

In July, Easter completed his formal report to Farm Minister Andy Mitchell. He has winnowed much of the wheat from the chaff. Even the title of his report, *Empowering Canadian Farmers in the Marketplace*, flags the root cause and the primary solution to chronically declining farm incomes.

Easter begins by noting that farmers want to earn their income from the marketplace. Right on – if you have ever wondered why farm entrepreneurs involved in dairy and poultry, almost without exception, support the principles of their supply management system, look no further than this simple reality. Supply management assures that farm income is earned from the marketplace. Farmers accept production controls and quotas and negotiated prices and limitations on their entrepreneurial activities when those limits assure them of farm income from the marketplace.

Easter responds to the be-more-efficient solution. He's right to argue that it has not worked – and it won't work. Farming is a leader in productivity growth – with the net result that we have two-thirds fewer farmers today than 50 years ago, many of whom are now part-time. Without the market power to capture the economic benefits, being more productive merely results in fewer farmers, not better incomes.

Easter recommends new powers for the Competition Bureau, the Competition Act and New Generation Cooperatives. All good ideas, *but* …. Existing legislation, whether focused on competition or on cooperation, limits farmers to seeking fairer relationships with immediate buyers. The lack of marketplace power for farmers is bigger than immediate buyers. The problem is the entire food chain, increasingly managed by a few superstores.

Easter recommends more transparency for the food chain, with publication of more data on the farmers' share. Here he is on the right track but stops short of a way out. The solution is NOT more data. What farmers need is legislation that enables them to negotiate for fair prices. In the past it was enough to negotiate with immediate buyers – the basis of the farm products marketing legislation that now exists both provincially and federally. But in today's superstore-managed food chain, the immediate buyers of farm production also have little clout in the marketplace. Fair competition or cooperative marketing that encompasses only the immediate buyers of farm products falls short of empowering farmers in the marketplace.

Legislation needs to bring the entire food chain to the table.

Read *Empowering Canadian Farmers in the Marketplace*, a report by The Honourable Wayne Easter, at www.agr.gc.ca/cb/min/index-e.php?s1=agmin&s2=consult&page=rpt0705

Read the *Final Report of the Farm Income Consultations* at: www.agr.gc.ca/cb/min/index-e.php?s1=agmin&s2=consult&page=natl.

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# Environmental stewardship: a homemaker's perspective

**Reflections on Stewardship**
Rick De Graaf

Recently, via Diaconal Ministries Canada and emails, I was introduced to Dennis and Cindy Verbeek of Houston BC. Cindy and her family are preparing to work for A Rocha Canada: Christians in Conservation – an organization very much committed to conservation around the world. The Verbeeks are both alumni of King's University College and Cindy is also alumnus of The Au Sable Institute for Environmental Studies. Their goal is to raise sufficient prayer and support partnerships so that they can begin working for A Rocha Canada at the Field & Ecology Centre in Surrey BC (for more information contact Cindy or Dennis at (250) 845-2222 or ckeeper@telus.net.).

Cindy is a stay-at-home mom challenged by a limited budget. I asked her for a homemaker's perspective on Environmental Stewardship. Here's what she wrote:

Five years ago my first child was born and we decided that I would stay home. As an environmental educator I talked about conserving resources, changing attitudes and accepting our place as stewards of the creation God has entrusted to us. I felt like I was making a difference in the world. Now I am at home, cleaning diapers, doing laundry and feeding my family.

Am I making a difference in the world? Absolutely! Maybe even more than I was before. Now, five years and two more children later, God has taught me that by slowing down to stay at home with my kids, living out what I believe in our daily activities and learning to be a better disciple of Christ, I am having a huge impact on conservation work.

Live what you believe. Environmental Stewardship is not talk; environmental stewardship is action (Cal DeWitt). Actually being a better steward of God's creation, though, is like learning to lose weight. Everyone knows how to do it but do I really want to do it? After all, it's so much work.

During a particularly tight time financially I started making changes to save money. I soon realized that I was also making the choices I needed to be a better steward of God's creation and found that it was actually fun. Now I hang laundry (a very relaxing event in itself), use cloth diapers, buy fresh whole foods, grow my own garden, and buy everything I can second hand.

Why had it seemed like so much work before? I hadn't slowed down enough to realize that taking care of creation is not rocket science. It is about daily choices. It's about changing habits and living what I believed.

### Be still and know

Learning to slow down was essential for environmental stewardship to become nestled in my heart as opposed to whirring around in my brain. As a parent at home this can be difficult. But without my quiet times in God's creation I lose sight of the reason why I compost, make meals from scratch and grow my own garden. As I take a walk with my kids to "the duck pond" or watch the rain pour from the heavens as we sit under an umbrella on our porch, we take time to be still. It is then that I recognized that God is my provider (not a paycheque) and he provides everything we need to survive and thrive.

### Discipleship

God has given us this earth to use but not to abuse. I could give you a list of "100 ways to save the earth" and those are valid and useful in their own way. But that is not the whole picture. The question is not "What set of rules makes you a good steward?" We make responsible choices because we are free in Christ and we want to show solidarity with him as disciples of the Creator of all things. Instead, we need to ask how will I treat creation knowing that God created it by his Word and sees it as good (Genesis)? How will I live knowing that every human being on this earth is created in the image of God with a responsibility to "tend and keep the garden"?

### The simple life

The simple life is not easy. In fact, it often means more elbow grease on our part, but it is so worth it! As an environmental educator I talked about how to do this every day, but I was so wrapped up in changing the world through my words that I didn't take the time to change the world through my actions. What a wonderful blessing it has been to truly live as a steward. Has this happened because we are richer? No. Because we follow a new set of laws to be good stewards? No.

Because we slow down enough to hear the still small voice of my Creator. Because with a bit of creativity we are able to use the resources God provides rather than striving for more. Because we make better choices that say we will not buy into consumerism and dependence on material possessions for happiness. And because we continue to learn and grow as disciples of the Creator of all things. For we know that "He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him." Colossians 1:15,16.

**Stewardly Tip** After three years of spending too much on the latest toys for my children I stumbled on the best toy ever: a tin can with a slit large enough for a lid from a frozen juice container. At age one this toy was the favorite for every one of my kids. Over and over they would insert juice can lids through the slit, one by one, so that they could listen to the wonderful crash it made as metal hit metal. Another favorite: a stick, a rock and a walk outside.

In a corner sits a $40.00 plastic talking alphabet toy gathering dust and reminding me that it is often the parents that the toys are designed for, not the kids. I wonder if it can be recycled?

**Readers**: Share your Stewardly Tips so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

**Next issue:** Managing Time: A New Season Begins

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Church renewal

# The priesthood of all believers: blue collar priests

**Pieter L. Hendriks**

In the April 4 and April 18, 2005 issues of *Christian Courier*, I wrote on the subject of The Priesthood of All Believers: Realized, Lost, Revisited, and Being Restored. These articles are part of the larger subject on the need to restructure our existing and sometimes long established churches of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. In an earlier article (CC, Jan. 10, 2005), I explained this need for restructuring in light of the overall vision of a Two-Dimensional (2-D) Church. This 2-D church is a church that functions with both its institutional and organic dimension well established and fully integrated. Such a 2-D church generates a much improved mutual-care ministry, a more effective ministry of evangelism, and greater enthusiasm for executing its cultural mandate.

The following article will bring the discussion on the priesthood of all believers to an end.

## Blue Collar Priests

When Martin Luther, in full public view, filed his 95 objections against the Roman Catholic Church on October 31, 1517, that event was interpreted by some Church officials as an attack on the Church itself. Spearheaded by Luther, the Protestant Reformation emphasized several rediscovered biblical truths expressed in the well-known Reformation slogans: sola fide, sola gratia, and sola scriptura. These three essential theological truths led Luther to rediscover a most important, though much ignored, ecclesiological truth, namely the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

For centuries, the clergy had viewed themselves as the only priesthood. Luther argued on biblical grounds that all believers are priests and constitute a holy priesthood. This means that there is no spiritual distinction between clergy and laity, as all are children of God and friends of Jesus through their common faith in and commitment to the once crucified and resurrected Lord and High Priest. There is a growing awareness that the priesthood of all believers is very important to a proper and much richer understanding of our ecclesiology.

That the priesthood of all believers is of such importance becomes even more clear when we realize that, even before God gave his Ten Commandments to Israel, he spoke of his deep desire that his people would become a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6) if they would obey him fully and keep his covenant (Exodus 19:5). From the very beginning of his journey with his people, liberated from Egyptian oppression, God looked forward to have enduring fellowship with them. How important the priesthood and priestly activities of his people are to him today! With a Bible verse such as 1 Peter 2: 9, it can no longer be denied that all believers in Christ have become priests who ought to take an active part in the priesthood, in the Church and in the world at large. God has given all his people the vocation of priests, and calls them to act and live like priests.

All believers are priests, though some earn their daily living as nurses, teachers, truck drivers, lawyers, doctors, business persons and so on. Christians can no longer believe that they are priests under the headship of Jesus as our High Priest and then act as if they don't have much to contribute to the church community. In Christ all believers have been given the task and opportunity and often the encouragement to live as Christ's priestly servants.

This does not mean that some are expected to act like armchair priests who keep their eyes on those who are supposed to attend to their needs, or that some are expected to act like white collar priests who tell others what to do, or that others are expected to act like high collar priests pretending to be of a higher class of priests, and that still others are expected to act like open collar priest who need not taking things seriously. All believers are called to act like blue collar priests, priests in overalls, who roll up their sleeves and get dirty.

An Old Testament passage may help explain the term blue collar priests. In the opening verses of Isaiah 40 the Lord comforted his people who were then still in captivity by speaking tenderly to them. Then in verses 3-4 the Lord urges these comforted people to help him reach those who are still in need of his comfort. God counts on those whom he has already comforted to get involved in his mission to comfort those who are still without the comfort of Christ as their Lord and Savior.

That is also the theme in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians:

> *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.*
>
> 2 Corinthians 1:3-5; NIV

Isaiah 40:1-5 and 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 help us to understand that as the Lord's priests Christians are involved in God's mission. The following two verses in Isaiah 40 show what that involvement entails:

> *A voice of one calling: In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.*
>
> Isaiah 40:3-4; NIV

The figurative language of these two verses reveals that our priestly duty is to work by 'hands-on' participation in the harvest, working hard and getting dirty in a spiritual sense. A good example of blue collar priests at work is found in Acts 2:42-47. With rolled-up sleeves Christians carried all sorts of furniture around, helped people by coping with their different needs, and being involved in small group gatherings and large group worship activities. As a result of their priestly lifestyle and witness more and more people became Christians.

Those blue collar priests were busy with the harvest, serving the once blood-covered, High Priest, Jesus Christ. They did so by serving one another, thus giving a powerful witness to the transforming power of the Lord, and as a result a continuous stream of human lives were saved and changed forever. The freshly poured out Spirit of Christ had a powerful influence on that first Christian congregation.

1 Peter 2: 4-5, 9 shows that the priesthood of all believers is not just a neat way of describing Christians collectively, nor to add some spiritual flavor to any individual Christian, but it shows that all Christians are expected to be spiritually alive and active, and very much involved in God's plan of redemption through their given ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5: 11-21).

At present there is a growing awareness that the biblical principle of the priesthood of all believers has never been totally acknowledged and implemented by the Protestant churches. Today's task is to complete the unfinished business of the Protestant Reformation. This process is well on its way with those churches that have decided to transform themselves into churches that are organized and structured around small ministry groups.

## Spiritual sacrifices and disciplines

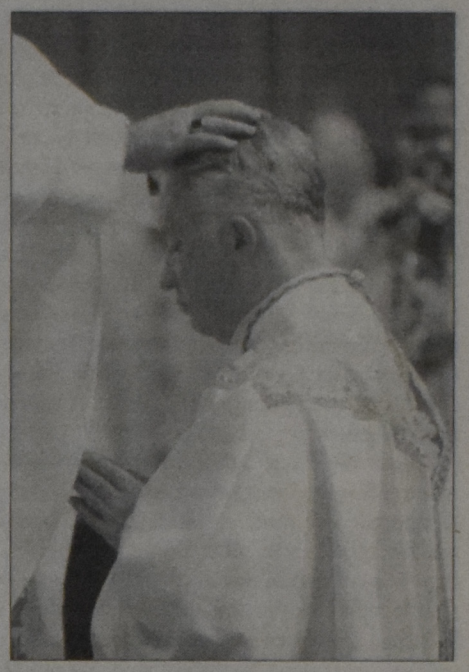
A discussion of the priesthood of all believes is not complete without saying something about spiritual sacrifices and spiritual disciplines. First, in 1 Peter 2:5 we read how closely the priesthood and spiritual sacrifices are connected:

> *You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ* (NIV).

Spiritual sacrifices are spiritual and moral acts as an offering to God, such as contrition or repentance, prayer, praise and thanksgiving to God. They are also described as an offering of ourselves by denying ourselves, followed by praying, giving thanks to God, financial offering (gifts) and other activities of a spiritual nature, including practical ministry to the needs of others. The book of Hebrews says:

> *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*
>
> (Hebrews 13:15-16; NIV see also Hosea 14:2)

Spiritual sacrifices are therefore particular activities and actions directed to God and others. All those activities and actions are done in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, and so are pleasing to God.



During the last ten to fifteen years many people have become more interested in spirituality. At the same time a growing number of Christians sensed a need to develop a deeper relationship with God. They wanted their lives changed and wanted to experience the power of the Holy Spirit that would help transform their lives. This life-transforming experience can happen through the practice of spiritual disciplines.

In their book *Disciplines of the Holy Spirit: How to Connect to the Spirit's Power and Presence,* Siang-Yang Tan and Douglas H. Gregg explain that through the use of spiritual disciplines believers may draw closer to God and build a deeper relationship to him. Through them, believers may experience a "transformed lifestyle and spiritually empowered ministry." In his book *Celebration of Discipline: The path to Spiritual Growth*, Richard J. Foster explains that the inner transformation of our lives through the use of spiritual disciplines is very much God's work and not ours. Dallas Willard in his book *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* says that Christians need to become like Christ, and that they can become like him by practicing spiritual disciplines to "realize our highest ideals of well-being and well-doing." He also says that we need to arrange our whole lives around the same things Jesus did in order to remain in the fellowship of his Father.

When we speak of spiritual disciplines we may well think of spiritual sacrifices. We will show that spiritual sacrifices and spiritual disciplines may refer to the same thing. When God's Word speaks of spiritual sacrifices we are to think of giving thanks and showing thankfulness, prayer, praise, humbling and denying ourselves, giving to the poor, showing

## Dirty hands, stained fingers

faith and love, worship, a broken spirit and a contrite heart, showing justice and compassion, and devotion.

To learn more about what spiritual discipline involves we may turn again to the three books I've mentioned. All three books begin with dividing the spiritual disciplines into several categories. Tan and Gregg, for example, divide their spiritual disciplines into three categories: Discipline of Solitude, Discipline of Surrender, and Discipline of Service.

The Discipline of Solitude covers the interrelated pairs of disciplines: solitude and silence, listening and guidance, prayer and intercession, study and meditation. The Discipline of Surrender entails interrelated groups of disciplines like repentance and confession, yielding and submission, fasting, and worship. The Discipline of Service finds expression in fellowship, simplicity, service, and witness.

Foster works with the following three categories: The Inward Disciplines, the Outward Disciplines, and the Corporate Disciplines. The Inward Disciplines consist of prayer, meditation, study and fasting. The Outward Disciplines consist of humility, submission, service, solitude and simplicity. The Corporate Disciplines are confession, worship, guidance and celebration.

Willard begins by dividing all his spiritual disciplines into two categories: of Abstinence and of Engagement. The Discipline of Abstinence covers spiritual disciplines such as secrecy (humility mine) chastity, solitude and silence, fasting, sacrifice and frugality (simplicity). Under the Discipline of Engagement he places the following spiritual disciplines: prayer, submission, confession, service, worship, celebration, study, and fellowship.

The meaning and significance of all the spiritual disciplines can be learned from these books. One conclusion that can be drawn is that, with the exception of spiritual disciplines such as simplicity, fellowship and celebration, spiritual disciplines can be aligned with the spiritual sacrifices mentioned earlier, at least for the most part.

Richard Foster believes that our involvement in spiritual disciplines is "best exercised in the midst of our relationships with our husband or wife, our brothers and sisters, our friends and neighbors." I would add that our children, who are so much part of our covenant families, need to be part of small gatherings of covenant people.

I am convinced that our participation in small ministry groups gives us a wonderful opportunity to get more regularly involved in activities of spiritual sacrifices and/or disciplines. A communal approach to practicing spiritual disciplines motivates and encourages its regular practice and will greatly benefit personal spiritual growth. It will help shape one's inner life and Christian character.

Willard says that it will help us "to love and constantly delight in our heavenly Father." It also helps our priestly ability to function as priests in service to the Lord. Participation in small ministry groups forms a basis that ensures much better mutual care among all members of the congregation, more effective evangelism, and greater enthusiasm for our cultural mandate.

May the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ be the model for us, his followers, when we minister to, among and with each other as Blue Collar Priests. Always remember that our triune God loves , wants and needs you: God the Father, our Creator, loves you no matter who you are and where you live; God the Son, our Lord and Savior, wants you totally, body and soul; God the Holy Spirit, our Counsellor, needs you as a loyal, committed, obedient and joyful participant in the harvest.

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# The season for picking berries

**By Christopher Andreae**

Every summer I promise myself, yet again, that I'll go raspberry picking. Then somehow the season slips past me. Fruit makes no concessions to delay.

But this year, here I am humming happily as I work my way down a row of raspberry canes in a field full of them. The sky is blue. The clouds billow like whipped egg whites. A scattering of other pickers are also at work.

There are children's voices on all sides. A grandfather calls out to his two charges: "What are you doing?" There is jocular suspicion in his voice.

"We're picking raspberries." (All innocence.)

"Picking or eating?"

The girl in the weighing shed had pointed me toward the raspberries – "over by that cottage there" – but she had added that they would probably be better next week. As I spoke to her, a lady with four cardboard baskets overflowing with strawberries plopped them down on the table. It looked as if strawberries were already ripe to the core.

"I phoned last week," I explained, "and the man said the raspberries would be better this week."

"Well, there are some," the girl said.

In fact, there were plenty.

There is nothing like picking raspberries. Among pickable fruit, they are the most enjoyable. They grow just about the right height, not requiring a kneeling pad or a ladder.

Plums, in contrast, demand a steady head for heights and canny skill in setting up and negotiating the ladder. Pears and apples demand a similar sense of dangerous escapade.

Strawberries, which don't know the meaning of tall, make themselves awkward in other ways. They are determinedly earthbound. The picker has to prostrate himself and even then must search under leaves to make sure the finest berries don't elude him.

Red currants hang in cascading, complicated, overripe bunches on the bush. You pull them off as best you can, but it's a messy, staining business.

Black currants aren't much more helpful. I got to know these difficult soft fruits at school.

Wild blackberries aren't easy to pick because the haphazard stems hook themselves onto you like the claws of so many anxious cats.

Thorniest of all, though, is a fruit that I have loved since childhood, even if fewer enthusiasts can be found for it today: the gooseberry. This round, veined, slightly hairy berry ripens on bushes protected by legions of prickles.

Even wearing gloves, you approach a gooseberry bush with caution. Then you take a gooseberry between thumb and forefinger, twist, and pull. Needles instantly attack you from every side.

But raspberries – not so thorny – are picker-friendly. Like blackberries, each raspberry has an inner core. Unlike blackberries, raspberries slip easily off their core, with no fight. So my basket started to fill surprisingly fast.

I noticed, coming down the row one over from "mine" (possession being nine-tenths of the law), a woman whose teenage daughter was picking along a row beyond her. They chatted with each other across the rows. After a while, the mother and I were opposite each other.

"It's like choosing a supermarket checkout queue, isn't it?" I said. "You always wonder if you've hit the best one. With fruit, you always think the next one probably has more and better fruit."

She laughed. "I know."

"There seem to be plenty for everyone, though," I added.

"Oh, yes. I'm three weeks earlier than usual. I have to get the jam made before our holiday. Without raspberry jam and pancakes, it won't be the holiday it should be. We meet up with my cousin's family. She makes the pancakes because I am useless at them. I make the jam. She can't make jam."

"Raspberries make the best jam in the universe, don't they?"

"We all love it."

We talked about what sort of sugar was best and how long you need to boil the jam. After a while, the two of them decided they had what they needed.

"Nice to meet you!" We all said.

Not long afterward, I saw that my basket was full, so I followed them to the weighing shed. I had picked seven pounds.

The girl weighed the fruit, but, I'm glad to say, not me. A friend told me how, years ago, she had taken her 5-year-old son raspberry picking. When they went to get the berries weighed, the man had said to the lad: "Just hop on the scales, son. I need to know how many you've eaten." Her boy stared solemnly at the man with round, worried eyes – until they all laughed at the joke.

I paid and headed for the car. Next to it, an entire family spilled out of their car. They were all smiling broadly, obviously pleased at the prospect of an hour or so of picking fruit. The women were wearing saris. The father of the family, beaming, looked twice at my brimming basket.

"Oh, what are they?" He asked.

"Raspberries."

"Ah. What do you do with them?"

"I make... " I began.

But his wife spoke sooner. "Jam," she said.

"You are picking strawberries?" I guessed.

"Oh, yes." More broad smiling.

This made me feel good. Fruit picking as cultural common ground. I like that idea.

## Opinion

# Heaven is not my home

Women have been in the news lately. Nine women – one Canadian – risked excommunication Monday July 25 by challenging the Roman Catholic Church's ban on female priests with an unofficial ordination ceremony on a tour boat sailing on the St. Lawrence River in the Thousand Islands region.

While the church wants to keep women at the bottom of the heap, *The Economist Magazine* wants to help more women get to the top. In its July 23 editorial, it highly recommends females for senior corporate jobs, because they make the companies more profitable. Women are good for business, but supposedly bad for the church.

That in a nutshell portrays the difference between what is said to be God's domain and what's supposed to be the secular world. It, in turn, gave me an excuse to look critically at the church and it message.

As a (still) church-going Christian, I am starting to wonder whether the church is accomplishing what it is supposed to do: bringing people closer to God. Allow me to back-track a bit.

After the council of Trent (1545 - 1563), held by the Roman Catholic Church to plan strategy to combat the rise of the Reformation, and after the Synod of Dordt (1619) in the Netherlands and the Westminster Confession of Faith (1643) in England, no new statements of faith have been written, cementing the church in the language, life-habits and social relationships of the West. Basically the church is caught in a 400 year old time-warp, the time of sailing boats, hand-to-hand combat, horse and buggy and subordinate women.

It is this ecclesiastical framework that, through its missionaries, was carried world-wide, supplanting other religions, in the sincere belief that God was absent there and only present in a Western Church, with a Western confession, with a Western structure and a Western liturgy.

That's why the Christian religion has never adapted to the tribal arrangement of Africa, where a totally different form of community is experienced. Nor has it taken advantage of the spiritual mysticism of the Asian religions, which could have offered a deeper sense of communion with God. Nor has it benefitted from the native piety of Latin America, or learned from the "Wisdom of the Elders,' the accumulated earth knowledge of indigenous people everywhere – also in North America – acquired over the millennia.

Had it done so, the disasters we now face in climate change, environmental degradation and cancerous economic growth, all imperiling the human race, could well have been prevented. By refusing to acknowledge the validity of these 'pagan' cultures and often openly ridiculing them, these native men and women were not only unable to contribute to the universality of the church, but, even worse, our close-minded actions turned them off completely from the Good News.

I believe that, by interpreting and experiencing the Scriptures exclusively from a Western – heaven-oriented – point of view, the church has become impoverished, stagnated and sterile. No longer is it the reforming body it is supposed to be, an institution that renews itself continuously, an example set by Jesus Christ himself.

I realize that, with so much commotion everywhere, we hate to meddle in the church, which always seems to bring out the worst in people. Yet I think that it is legitimate to question whether the church is on the right track, whether the time has come to look beyond nostalgia and tradition and wonder whether in this new century a different type of worship is required, not heaven as goal, but earth-oriented. I base this on Psalm 115:16, where it says "The heavens belong to the Lord and the earth he has given to the human race."

I don't have to point out that we haven't taken full responsibility for the wasteful and destructive ways of our Western world, where we are now cornered by finite resources. I know Carl Jung's observation that "people can't stand too much reality" is also true for the church. Reality is that the church is in trouble. We have not kept the world liveable, nor the Word relevant, for the next generation. No surprise that our youth is disenchanted and doesn't feel at home in the church or in the world. If we really believe that this earth is ours, forever, then we've got a job to do, where especially women are needed.

So you newly 'ordained' female office-bearers, if you want to get to the top, as *The Economist* suggests, don't reach up to Heaven but concentrate on the earth. Tell the outcasts and the shut-ins, and everybody in between, that Heaven is for God only. He has deeded the earth to us. Soil and trees, skies and seas are all part of the Good News, also vital to our 'spiritual' well-being. David Suzuki, who is reclaiming "The Lost Gospel of the Earth," is closer to the Truth than those theologians who preach heaven as goal, something Bonhoeffer calls 'pious godlessness.'

Religion remains very much in the news these days. Bill McKibben in the August issue of *Harper's magazine* wonders in his article "The Christian paradox: How a faithful nation gets Jesus wrong." Jim Wallis, of the religious magazine *Sojourners,* writes on the Opinion page of the *New York Times* of August 4 that "Republicans – the Christian right – consistently choose oil and gas interests over a cleaner world."

Why does America, which boasts to be a Christian nation, act and live as if creation is of no importance? Isn't that inconsistent with the Christian message? Has the church got it all wrong?

One of the oldest Protestant statements of faith, the so-called Belgic Confession written in Antwerp in 1561, starts with the words that God is completely wise and the overflowing source of all good. It then continues to say that we know him: "First, by the Creation, preservation and government of the universe, since it is like a beautiful book..." That's how I see it. If we want to get close to Bach or Shakespeare or Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*, we play or listen to their compositions or read their plays or books. That gives us a fairly good idea about these talented men. The same applies to God. So if we want to know more about him, we study his work of art: we look at the trees, the skies, the seas, ourselves, all wonderful testimonies to his greatness. We honor God, as the theologians say, by respecting his creation.

That's why the Sabbath was instituted. Thomas Aquinas wrote in his "Via Positiva," commenting on Exodus 20:11: " The sanctification of the Sabbath is in memory of the creation of all things."

The way a 'faithful nation gets Jesus wrong,' is by separating nature (the world) from grace (religion) and making the Bible God's only revelation. If Christianity really wanted to be true to God it would be in the ecology or biology business.

Not only have theologians not devoted themselves to earth-matters, they have done the opposite. The "Left Behind" books show that.

There is on old hymn, which calls the earth "wilderness waste." Perhaps a few can recall the hymn: "I am a stranger here within a foreign land, my home is far away upon the golden strand." Referring to heaven, of course. But, my Bible tells me that this is impossible. I read in 1 Timothy 6:16: "God lives in inapproachable light. Nobody can see him. Nobody has seen him." If that is true, then we cannot go and see God. We cannot go to heaven. Yet the entire church, almost all its ministers, preach that. It sounds pious enough, but it is pious Christian secularism, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it. "Earth, God and the Human Race belong together," says this great German theologian.

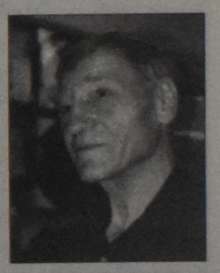
Heaven as the Christian's final resting place is a long-standing belief. And wrong. The trouble with Christian America is that it doesn't know the Bible. Only half of all Americans can name one of the four authors of the Gospels. More than 10 percent believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife. That, as Psalm 115:16 says: "The heavens belong to the Lord, and the earth he has given to the human race," hardly anybody knows. Most believe that our soul or spirit or whatever will fly up to heaven in whatever fashion, even though Daniel 12:13, says, "You will rest and at the end of days will rise to receive your inheritance."

So what are the consequences of this reality check? If God has given us the earth, Sunday church services should be held outdoors, should consist of field excursions, admiring nature, a trip to the beach, a walk in the woods.

And church buildings should be used not for preaching but for communal prayer, for sharing stories, for helping each other live a life of sustainability in our ever more fragile earth. The so-called 'sanctuary' should be converted into smaller rooms, with lower ceilings so that they aren't as difficult to heat. Hold Bible reading there, in small groups – small is beautiful (where 2 or 3 are together... ) – workshops, make music, compose new songs, exchange, barter or do crafts and other artistic work, educate each other in godly living, meditating, and trying to swear off our addiction to carbon fuels and other destructive living habits. The real sanctuary is God's creation.

Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died a martyr in April 1945 in Germany, wrote in his *Ethics*: "There is a godlessness, full of promise, which speaks against religion and against the Church.... There is relevance in Luther's saying that perhaps God would rather hear the curses of the ungodly than the alleluia of the pious."

Suppose the church were to work for a future here on earth and not somewhere up in the blue yonder, I believe the youth would return. Suppose the church would provide a viable alternative to the meaningless of life, it would engender hope. Isn't that its mission? Will it happen? The ecclesiastical authorities have a vested interest in the status quo and so it will not come from them. Will the needed change come from within?

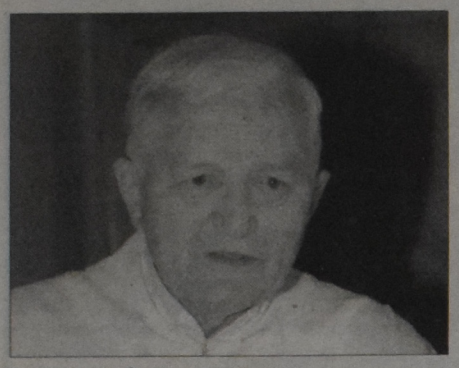


*Past columns and other writings can be seen at 'hielema.ca'.*

Scripture repeatedly reminds us that our next life will be lived on the new earth. The term "new" implies that this final destination will differ somewhat from the planet we currently inhabit, while the term "earth" reassures us that it will still feel very much like home. According to 2 Peter 3:13, the main difference between this world and the next is moral, for the sin and suffering of this present age will be replaced with "a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."

– Michael E. Wittmer,
*Heaven is a place on earth*

# Violent death of Taizé founder Brother Roger stuns church leaders



**Bernadette Sauvaget**

Cologne (ENI) – The death of Brother Roger the 90-year-old founder of the Taizé Community in Burgundy, France, has stunned world Christian leaders from many denominations who deplored his killing at the hands of a woman wielding a knife.

Brother Roger Schutz, the son of a Swiss Protestant pastor, was killed as he prayed during a gathering of 2500 young pilgrims at the community's Burgundy centre. Police said they had arrested a 36-year-old Romanian woman, thought to be mentally disturbed.

The acting head of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches, Geneviève Jacques, said in a tribute on 17 August: "His ceaseless search for an authentic ecumenical dialogue between believers went far beyond any institutional barriers, and he achieved a particular resonance with young people."

Pope Benedict XVI said from his summer residence at Castel Gandolfo: "This most sad news strikes me even more because just yesterday I received a letter from him." It was "a very moving and loving letter" to say he was with the pontiff and those who would be with him in Cologne for the August 16-21 World Youth Days, during the Pope's upcoming visit to Germany.

The president of the Conference of European Churches and of the French Protestant Federation (FPF), Pastor Jean-Arnold de Clermont in an interview with Ecumenical News International spoke of "consternation at this fatal madness." He said "We would have wished a peaceful death for Brother Roger."

De Clermont said: "We need to pay homage to the work on the liturgy made by the Community. The Taizé hymns are, indeed, known and sung throughout the world."

The general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, Ishmael Noko, said: "This terrible event takes on a broader dimension as we witness the steady increase of violence in today's world. Forces of violence are moving among us and within us, from which we must pray fervently to be delivered. Taizé is, and remains, an embodiment of this prayer."

From England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, said: "This is an indescribable shock. Brother Roger was one of the best loved Christian leaders of our time, and hundreds of thousands will be feeling his loss very personally, and remembering him in prayer and gratitude."

In 1940, Roger Schutz founded the Taizé Community, an ecumenical monastic community which advanced Protestant male monasticism, noted Pastor de Clermont.

From the 1960s, thousands of young people, coming initially from Europe then from the whole world, would attend Taizé regularly. Brother Roger was very close to Jean_Paul II when he was pope and he also paid close attention to Eastern European countries during the communist period. He frequently visited Cracow at the time Jean_Paul II was an archbishop there.

In his old aged the Taizé founder became frail and needed to use a wheel chair, but in April he attended the funeral of Jean-Paul II where he received the Catholic Eucharist from the hands of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who would become Pope Benedict XVI.

Relations between Taizé and French Protestants, however, went through some difficult phases. A member of the FPF, the community of Taizé withdrew for a while during the 1970s. The conversion to Catholicism and secret ordination to the priesthood of Max Thurian, the right hand man of Brother Roger, stunned Protestants.

Eight years ago, Brother Roger had designated his successor, according to the rules of the community and nominated a German Catholic, Brother Alois, aged 51, who left Cologne to return to Taizé on hearing the news of Brother Roger's death.

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**PHOTOS**
There is a processing fee of $25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged P.I., but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. We need either an original photo (which we will return) or a downloadable internet image.
**PERSONAL ADS**
*Christian Courier* would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is $25. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at $16 P.I. per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.
**NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS**
We offer a $25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in *Christian Courier* and to parents who announce a child's birth in our paper. If you want to take advantage of this offer, please let us know when placing your ad.
**SUBMITTING YOUR AD**
Mail: Christian Courier
1 Hiscott St
St Catharines ON L2R 1C7
fax: 905-682-8313 e-mail: see above
**OTHER INFORMATION**
*Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style. Please provide us with clear copy. *Christian Courier* is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.

## Anniversaries

**ARIE AND TEUNY NUGTEREN (VanHOLST)**

**August 31, 1955 - 2005**

We praise God for **50 wonderful years**.
The Lord is good!

*May the Lord continue to go before you and be with you.* Deut. 31:8a.

Sharing in the joy of our parents & grandparents,
Fred & Wendy Nugteren, *Waterford, ON*
Nanda & John Zwart, *Hollen, ON*
Art & Lina Nugteren, *Cawston, BC*
Astrid & Al Hartholt, *Cambridge, ON*
Marja & Mike Mol, *Brampton, ON*
21 grandchildren & 1 great-grandchild

Home address: #906 – 35 Kingknoll Drive
Brampton ON L6Y 5G5

---

Groningen September 6 Oakville
1955 2005

With thankful hearts and praise to God
for his many blessings
we celebrate the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of

**SIMON AND MARTHA KOUWENHOVEN**
nee **Stellingwerff**

With love from your children and grandchildren:
Wendy & Philip La Pierre, *Kentville, N.S.*
David. Marissa, Daniel and Alexander
Steven (deceased)
Joanne & Glenn Stronks, *Kakabeka Falls, ON*
Joshua, Amanda
Franciska Kouwenhoven, *Toronto, ON*

We invite you to an **Open House**,
to be held on Monday, September 5, 2005
from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. at Paletta Lakefront Park,
4250 Lakeshore Road, Burlington, ON
*Best wishes only please.*

Home address: 2409 Marine Drive
Oakville ON L6L1C6
skouw@sympatico.ca

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**DUTCH SERVICE**

will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church **Sept. 11** at **3:00 p.m.**

Welkom

Rev. John Hellinga will be preaching.

---

Psalm 121

With praise and thanksgiving to God,

**ED AND TENA VAN GEEST**

will be celebrating, God willing,
their **45th Wedding Anniversary**
on Saturday, September 10

Their family invites you to join the celebration
with an **Open House** from 2:30 to 5:00
at their residence:

29 McDonald St. W. Listowel

*Best Wishes only please.*

---

1945 2005

With joy and thanksgiving to God

**ANDREW AND TENA HESLINGA**

celebrate **60 years of marriage**
on October 3, 2005.

May they enjoy even more years of health
and well being in God's grace.

Their children:
Fred & Ella Heslinga, *Essex, Ont.*
Don & Gail Heslinga, *Komoka, Ont.*
Jack Heslinga, *St. Thomas, Ont.*
Jo-Ann († 2001) & John Burrows, *Dundas, Ont.*
and 7 grandchildren & 5 great-grandchildren

Home address: 10 Rapelje St.
St. Thomas ON N5R 4M1

## Obituaries

**JOHN (JOHANNES) PROPER**

Emst & Voorst, The Netherlands, January 4, 1911
Rockwood & Shalom Manor, Grimsby, August 6, 2005

John Proper died peacefully with the words of John 14:1-4 in his ears: "In my Father's house are many rooms.... I will come back and take you to be with me." The funeral service was in Bethel CRC, Acton, their church home since 1960.

As a family we remembered Dad and celebrated God's gift of him to us as "the rock from which we were carved." Their former pastor Rev. Dirk Miedema comforted and encouraged us from God's Word on the theme "John Proper's Final Emigration" based on John 14:1-4.

He was the loving husband of Maria Jacoba Proper, now living at Shalom Manor in Grimsby.

Father, grandfather, and great-grandfather of:

Grace & Dick Hockenberry & Ashley of *Dayton,Ohio*
Donald Hockenberry – Donja
Anita & Edgar Davis – Elizabeth,
Kansas, Teddy, Aaron
Herman & Diane Proper of *Ancaster*
Stephanie & Greg VanRooyen
Janelle, Katelyn, Luke
Wendy & Phil Nelson – Nichola, Bethany
Nathan & Karen Proper – Lauren
Monica & James Mudde – Alexander
Andrew Proper
Bob & Alice Proper of *Russell, Ontario*
John Proper
Christina & Ben Stapper – Amos
Justin Proper
Phillip Proper
Tom Proper
Freda & George VanArragon of *St. Catharines*
Esther & Mike Lessard – Caleb, Elijah
Rachel & Jason Hofing – Isaac, Aria
Joel & Vicki VanArragon
Jonathan VanArragon

Correspondence: Maria Jacoba Proper, Shalom Manor
12 Bartlett Avenue,
Grimsby ON L3M 4N5

Phone – 905-309-2418

---

**ALICE BEATRICE ELGERSMA**

Peacefully from Shalom Manor, Grimsby, on Tuesday August 2, 2005, the Lord called home Alice Elgersma, wife of the late Melvin Elgersma (1986), in her 97th year.

Cherished mother of Sylvia & Peter Damm of *Cayuga*, Steve & Jenny of *Dunnville*, John & Lynne of *Cayuga*, Andy & Joanne of *Wisconsin Rapids, Wi*, Leo & Alice of *Mount Hope*, Tena & Otto Kiers of *Caledonia*, Martha Verschoor of *Brantford*, Jane & David Hadden of *Lambeth*, Raymond & Gerda of *Hagersville* and Helen & Bryan Cowan of *Jarvis*.

Beloved Grandmother of 48 grandchildren, 100 great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-grandchildren. Sister of Catrinus Montsma of *the Netherlands*.

Predeceased by sons-in-law John Dykstra and Bernie Verschoor, one infant grandchild, three infant great-grandchildren, six brothers & one sister.

Correspondence: John Elgersma
1691 Regional Rd 17 RR 1, Cayuga ON N0A 1E0

---

**JEANETTE HUIZINGA** (nee **VanderMeulen**)

of Woodstock died peacefully at the Woodstock General Hospital on Friday, August 12, 2005 in her 83rd year.

Beloved wife of the late Edward Huizinga (2000). Loved mother of Frances Bouwers & her husband Henk, Gilbert & his wife Helen, Betty Barwegen & her husband Rienk, Anne Oosterhuis & her husband Gary, Harry & his wife Emmie, Katherine Oosterhuis & her husband Stuart, Linda Large and Bob Calamatto, Sylvia Booy & her husband Steve, Louise Maas & her husband Arend and Edward & his wife Dawn.

Dear grandmother of 30 grandchildren and 39 great-grandchildren and sister of Ann Kroll, Mac VanderMeulen & his wife Catherine, George VanderMeulen & his wife Greta and Herman VanderMeulen & his wife Gerda. Predeceased by her granddaughter Lori (1979), and by her brothers Sidney, Ralph and Elle,

The funeral service was held at the Maranatha Christian Reformed Church, Woodstock on Monday August 15, 2005 at 11:00 a.m. with Pastor Ralph Koops officiating. Interment in the Oxford Memorial Park Cemetery. Contributions to the Canadian Cancer Society would be appreciated.

Online condolences at www.longworthfuneralhome.com

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On September 10th, 2005,
**STRATHROY COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**
(formerly John Calvin Christian School) will be celebrating 50 years of "providing quality Christ-centred education."
Call 519-245-1934
or see www.sccs.ca

---

**BETHEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**
333 Davis Drive, Newmarket, Ontario.
**INVITATION TO OUR 50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**
With thankfulness to God
we will celebrate our
50th Anniversary **October 1 & 2, 2005**. D.V.

To obtain tickets to attend the Saturday dinner and for more information please call John VanLeeuwen at (Ph) **905-775-0367**, or fax 905- 775-8295. Email: **jvanle0431@rogers.com**

## Classifieds/Job Opportunities

### For Sale

Ruby model in Phase 2 of **WELLINGSTONE CHRISTIAN HOMES** in Hamilton.
Please call **(905) 389-1679** after 6 p.m. for information.

*The Ruby has 894 square feet of space consisting of kitchen, living room, master bedroom with a walk-in closet and a second bedroom with a smaller closet.The Ruby also has a balcony/patio and a storage area.*

For **pictures** of a Wellingstone Homes and model suite, visit: **www.wellingstone.ca**

**TRAILER** - 29 feet with 8 x 10 added sunroom. Located at Little Europe Resort in Bracebridge. Call: 905-451-6172

### Farm for Sale

**Market What You Grow-**
77 acre - ideal fruit, veggie farm with irrigation.1400 sq. ft. established Produce, Craft, Gift Store, modern 3044 sq. ft.bi-level with lots of extras on busy Hwy. 3, 2 miles South of Carman,Mb. Large Dutch population, Dutch Reform Church, Dutch Christian School. Great place to raise your children. **1-204-745-3478.**

### For Rent

**APARTMENT FOR RENT**
above the Verstraete travel office in **St. Catharines.**
Contact Ria at **905 934 4414**

**St. Catharines-** Room in shared house with other **students**. On bus route. 350/mo includes utilities.
Call Anita at **905-684-5806.**

**Apt for Rent**
Two bedroom, bright, shared laundry, central vac, parking, **Holland Marsh**, 5 miles from Newmarket (Hwy #400 & 9) No smokers or pets. $1,000 inclusive Available Nov 1st. Ralph & Emmy Lise, **905-775-4241**

### FIRST HAMILTON CRC

in downtown Hamilton
has openings for three part-time staffing positions.

(1) **Pastor of Visitation**: The primary focus will be to the elderly and shut-ins of our congregation. Availability to conduct visitations during the day is preferred. This position is ideally suited for a retired ordained pastor.

(2) **Visiting Preacher:** An ordained pastor is required to preach 18-24 times per year. Preference will be given to those who embrace the Reformed tradition and who are committed to the missional understanding of the church.

(3) **Worship Coordinator:** This position involves planning & coordinating of our worship services. Knowledge of the Reformed theological tradition and familiarity with various music genres is required.

Each of these positions is for 1-2 years. Interested applicants should contact the church office at **(905) 528-3826** or e-mail at **office@firsthamilton.ca** for a complete job description or further information.

### Bed & Breakfast

**INGERSOLL, ON -**
Near London
**Lil' Bit Country Guest Suite (B&B)**
Featuring a private entrance, elegant & spacious air conditioned *Guest Suite*, on the lower level, decorated richly in an oak decor to enhance the furnishings. The thermostat controlled gas fireplace brings warmth in the cooler seasons, while you are entertained with a generous library of videos, music, games and reading, along with cable television. A billiard table is also available for adult use. The *Guest Washroom* on the main floor level, features a large shower with a multi-pulsating head for your comfort. The suite *Kitchenette* is stocked with electrical appliances, dishes & supplies for refreshments available at your leisure. A comfortable *Queen Bed* with extra cots are available. Optional Continental or Self Catered breakfast can be provided in the suite or a full Breakfast is served in the Family Dining Room. Centrally located in SW Ontario, ideal for tourists, travellers or vacationers in the area, easy access to main highways and tourist attractions. Reduced rates for a Multi Night stay.
For *information - Nico and Alice Jukema. PH: 519-485-2101, email:* guestsuite@lilbitcountry.ca *web:*www.lilbitcountry.ca

### Church News

**Iron Springs**
Christian Reformed Church of southern Alberta is happy to announce that candidate

**Greg Sinclair**
has acepted a call to our church.

**Douglas VandeKamp**
has accepted a call to serve as pastor of **First CRC** of Orillia..

### Available for Call

The council of Bethel CRC of Lacombe, Alberta wishes to announce that after a year of sabbatical studies,
**Rev. Kirk MacNeil**
is available for call.
Pastor Kirk can be reached at
13011 - 39th Street
Edmonton AB T5A 5A3
by email at
rational@telusplanet.net
or janetandkirk@msn.com
or by phone at (780) 456-5362

## Dordt College

### *Dean of Chapel*

Dordt College is seeking an enthusiastic Christian to serve as *Dean of Chapel*. Reporting to the Vice President of Student Services, primary responsibilities will include nurturing the spiritual life of the college community through preaching, teaching, discipleship training, worship leadership, and pastoral care.

Candidates should possess a Master's Degree in Divinity, and a ThM and/or PhD. Three years of related experience and campus ministry training is also highly desired. Candidates who are ordained or ordainable in a confessional Reformed denomination are preferred. Demonstrated teaching ability, as well as strong pastoral skills in the area of spiritual formation and counseling are desired. Good organizational skills, as well as strong verbal and written communication skills are essential.

Qualified candidates with a personal commitment to a Reformed, biblical faith and the mission of Dordt College should forward a letter of application and resume to Susan Droog, Director of Human Resources at the address listed below. A review of all applications will begin in early November and continue until the position is filled.

**Dordt College**
**498 Fourth Ave NE**
**Sioux Center, IA 51250**
**Phone: (712) 722-6011**
**Fax: (712) 722-1198**
**E-mail: sdroog@dordt.edu**

*Dordt College does not discriminate as to sex, age, national origin, marital status or against those who are disabled.*

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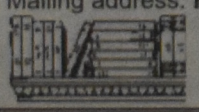
CSS

**Redeemer University College**
777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, Ontario L9K 1J4
905-648-2131 ext. 4205 (Ben) stewardship@redeemer.on.ca

### APPEAL!

**Faith Reformed Church of Telkwa** is in need of
**1976 Edition Psalter Hymnals**
to supply its newly built church. Please help us out!
Contact: George Koopmans, Clerk, at **(250) 846-5386** (Collect) or by email at: **geankoopmans@bulkley.net**
Mailing address: **Faith Reformed Church of Telkwa**
**Box 504**
**TELKWA BC V0J 2X0 CANADA**



## CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*A community of faith. A center of learning. A life of ministry.*

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**Featured topics of our fall programming will be**
- Reconciliation and Change
- Preaching
- Worship and the Arts
- Leading Congregations

**Speakers who will join us are**
- Brenda Salter-McNeil
- Richard Mouw
- David A. Davis
- Jim Herrington and Trisha Taylor

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- Center for Excellence in Preaching
- Calvin Institute of Christian Worship
- Sustaining Pastoral Excellence
- Church Connection Initiative at Trinity Christian College

3233 Burton Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546 • *www.calvinseminary.edu*

## Classifieds

# THE BACK TO GOD HOUR

*3475 Mainway PO Box 5070 Stn LCD1 Burlington ON L7R 3Y8*

**Radio- From Coast to Coast** **Web: www.backtogod.net/**

*BRITISH COLUMBIA*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Burns Lake – CFLD | 9:15 am | 1400 |
| Osoyoos – CJOR | 8:00 am | 1490 |
| Penticton – CKOR | 8:00 am | 800 |
| Port Alberni – CJAV | 7:00 pm | 1240 |
| Prince George – CIRX | 7:00 am | 94.3 |
| Princeton – CHOR | 8:00 am | 1400 |
| Smithers – CFBV | 9:15 am | 1230 |
| Summerland – CHOR | 8:00 am | 1450 |
| Vernon – CJIB | 9:30 pm | 94 |

*ALBERTA*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Brooks – CIBQ | 8:30 am | 1340 |
| Ft. McMurray – CJOK | 8:30 am | 1230 |
| High River – CHRB | 6:30 pm | 1140 |
| Edmonton – CJCA | 6:00 pm | 930 |
| Westlock – CFOK | 7:30 am | 1370 |

*SASKATCHEWAN*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Estevan – CJSL | 8:00 am | 1280 |
| Weyburn – CFSL | 8:00 am | 1190 |

*MANITOBA*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Altona – CFAM | 9:30 am | 950 |
| Steinbach – CHSM | 9:30 am | 1250 |
| Winnipeg – CKJS | 9:00 am | 810 |

*ONTARIO*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Atikokan – CFAK | 9:30 am | 1240 |
| Chatham – CFCO | 6:30 am | 630 |
| Guelph – CJOY | 8:30 am | 1460 |
| Hamilton – CHAM | 7:30 am | 820 |
| Kapuskasing – CKAP | 7:00 am | 580 |
| London – CKSL | 7:00 am | 1410 |
| Oshawa – CKDO | 8:00 am | 1350 |
| Owen Sound – CFOS | 7:00 am | 560 |
| Pembroke – CHVR | 10:00 am | 96.7 |
| Sarnia – CHOK | 7:30 am | 1070 |
| Stratford – CJCS | 8:45 am | 1240 |
| Tilsonburg – CKOT | 9:02 am | 101.3 |
| Windsor – CKLW | 7:30 am | 800 |
| Wingham – CKNX | 10:30 am | 920 |
| Woodstock – CJFH | 7:30 am | 94.03 |

*NEW BRUNSWICK*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Saint John – CHSJ | 9:00 am | 94.1 |

*PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Charlottetown – CFCY | 7:00 am | 630 |

*NOVA SCOTIA*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Bridgewater – CKBW | 7:30 am | 1000 |
| Digby – CKDY | 6:00 am | 1420 |
| Halifax – CFDR | 8:30 am | 780 |
| Liverpool – CKBW | 7:30 am | 94.5 |
| Kentville – CKEN | 8:30 am | 1490 |
| Middleton – CKAD | 8:30 am | 1350 |
| New Glasgow – CKEC | 7:30 am | 1320 |
| Shelburne – CKBW | 7:30 am | 93.1 |
| Sydney – CJCB | 7:00 am | 1270 |
| Weymouth – CKDY | 8:30 am | 103.1 |
| Windsor – CFAB | 8:30 am | 1450 |

**TELEVISION** ***Primary Focus***

*ON* CTS Sat. - 7:30pm

*AB* Lethbridge - CJIL Thurs.- 9:00pm

# BOND INVESTMENTS

ELIM Village

**Elim Village** is located on 20 acres in the heart of Surrey's Fleetwood area. Operated by the Elim Housing Society, a non-profit organization, Elim Village is a unique Christian Retirement Community. When fully developed it will be home to some 700 seniors and will offer a wide variety of housing and care options. More than 125 Independent Living apartments and duplexes are now completed. Construction is currently underway on 109 Independent Plus Living apartments with a completion date of August 2005.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The interest earned will fluctuate during the five-year term as the Royal Bank prime rate fluctuates and could pay up to 7% p.a.

This is not to be construed as an offer to solicit investments and no investment can be made until the investor has received an Information Statement issued by Elim Housing Society.

Investments can be made within an RRSP or RIF shorter term investments are also available.

**We presently offer** Royal Bank prime plus one percent

*for instance*, on August 15, 2005, Elim was accruing interest at **5.25% p.a.**

**Call Jake & Jenny DeWeerd 604 583~3546**

Presentation Centre: 9089 - 160th Ave. Surrey, British Columbia

*A Christian Retirement Community*

## Kids CornerRadio

ALBERTA

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Drayton Valley | CIBW 92.9 FM | Sun. 8:30 am |
| High River/Calgary | CHRB 1140 AM | Sun. 4:30 pm |
| Nordegg | CHBW 93.9 FM | Sun. 8:30 am |
| Rocky Mtn.House | CHBW 94.5 FM | Sun. 8:30 am |

BRITISH COLUMBIA

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Prince Rupert | CIAJ 100.7 FM | Sat. 10 am |

MANITOBA

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Altona | CFAM 950 AM | Sun. 4 pm |
| Steinbach | CHSM 1250 AM | Sun. 4 pm |

NOVA SCOTIA

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Bridgewater | CKBW 1000 AM | Sun. 5:30 am |

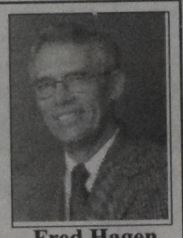
ONTARIO

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Oshawa | CKDO 1350 AM | Sat. 8 am |
| Woodstock | CJFH 94.3 FM | Sat. 8 am |

SASKATCHEWAN

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Estevan | CJSL 1280 AM | Sun. 7 am |
| Weyburn | CJSL 1190 AM | Sun. 7 am |

FRED HAGEN Realty



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Ontario L0R 1W0
Email: hagen@fredhagenrealty.com
www.fredhagenrealty.com

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**NETHERLANDS BAZAAR** coming **October 15** to the Thornhill Community Centre.
See Calendar of Events for details

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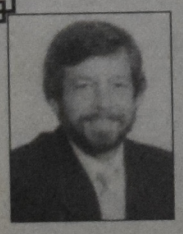
**Write**: Christian Reformed Extension Fund
45 Harriet St, Toronto ON M4L 2G1
**Fax**: 416-465-6367 **Call**: **416-461-1207**

"...serving Christian Reformed churches and Christian schools since 1970"



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**Email:** dvanderwoerd@rossmcbride.com

## Events/Advertising

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Sep 10** **Strathroy** Christian School **50th anniversary** celebration. See Aug. 15 issue for all the details or call 519-245-1934 or see the website: www.sccs.ca

**Sept 11 - Dutch Service** will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. John Hellinga will be preaching.

**Oct 1 & 2** BETHEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH, **Newmarke**t, Ontario. 50th anniversary weekend of celebration Former member and friends invited. To obtain tickets to attend the Saturday dinner and for more information, call John VanLeeuwen at 905-775-0367 Ph., 905- 775-8295 Fax, or jvanle0431@rogers.com

**Oct 15** Netherlands Bazaar, **Thornhill** Community Centre, 7755 Bayview Avenue, **Thornhill**. Market Place 10:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m. Features: Restaurants with Dutch delicacies, live music, bake-sale, groceries, Delft Blue pottery, gifts, handicrafts, Draw and Auction 6:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m. Admission free. For information call 905-477-1243 or 416-223-5026


ARE YOU PLANNING TO ATTEND

THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
OR
WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

THIS FALL?

If so...

Waterloo Christian Reformed Church is holding a Student Welcome Service for you, your parents and friends

*SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2005*
*at 10:30 am*

*LUNCHEON PROVIDED AFTER THE SERVICE*
*and information about campus ministry*

contact Chaplain Graham E. Morbey
gmorbey@wlu
519-886-1474

The church is located at 209 Bearinger Road, Waterloo

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- Benefits the charities of your choice

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Toronto M4L 2G1
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Fax: 416-465-6367
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**email:** windmill@godutch.com
**Internet:** www.GoDutch.com
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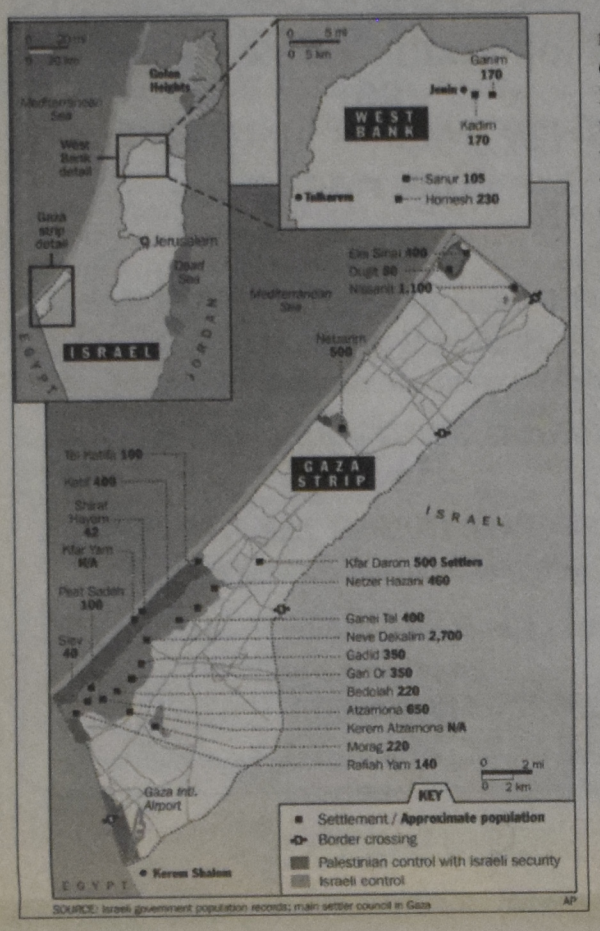
# Eyes tearful, hopeful in Gaza




**Harry der Nederlanden**

We have seen the television coverage of Jewish families evicted and dragged from homes they built and where they raised their children. Close knit communities were uprooted and the homes destroyed. There was much anger and grief.

Watching the process outside the settlements were the Palestinians. They celebrated because they were getting back what was once theirs and perhaps at last getting control over their country and their lives. No doubt there was also a sense of satisfaction at the settlers getting theirs, for relationships with the Israeli settlers has hardly been neighborly. But perhaps a few of them felt a twinge of compassion seeing families uprooted and homes destroyed. Many of them know what it is like.

Can this lead to peace – grief and rage on one side and jubilation on the other? That's the hope.

On August 18 about 55,000 soldiers were deployed to remove those settlers who had not yet left on their own and whose numbers were inflated by Israeli demonstrators opposed to so-called disengagement. The soldiers were unarmed and sent in overwhelming numbers to decrease the likelihood of injuries.

It was a heart-wrenching process, for quite a number of the soldiers were raised in just such settlements. But, Sharon told the nation, "It is not possible to continue holding 3.5 million peole under occupation." He added: "It is a terrible thing for Israel, for the Palestinians and for the Israeli economy."

When did these settlements get started? Why would anyone choose to live in a fenced compound surrounded by hostile neighbors? The settlements were started after the Six-day War in 1967 when Israel was attacked by Egypt and Syria. In winning the war, Israel occupied the Sinai, Gaza and the West Bank.

The settlements were established as a buffer zone as paramilitary compounds, but they were also seen as a way of claiming territory that many Israelis consider part of the Holy Land promised to them by God. Over the last 38 years some 8,500 Israelis have settled in Gaza in 21 different settlements. All of these were ordered evacuated as well as four small ones on the West Bank. Most of them have left peacefully, but the ones who remained were reinforced by demonstrators determined to embarrass the government of Sharon.

According to Omar Dajani, a former senior legal advisor to the Palestinian Authority, before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 about 800,000 Palestinians lived in Gaza, but afterward they were joined by 200,000 refugees. Today three-quarters of the population still consider themselves refugees and continue to live in very crowded camps. They suffer an unemployment rate of over 60 percent and most live on less than $2 a day. Their movement, especially after the intifadas have been severely restricted. Only some 4,000 have been granted permission to work in Israel.

Israel's pull-out from Gaza is not part of a larger peace deal. But recently the government has come to the conclusion that things cannot continue as they are. The Palestinian population is growing much faster than the Jewish population. If Israel were to annex the territory and its inhabitants, by 2020 the Jewish population would be outnumbered. Then Israel would either have to become a state that practices apartheid, repressing its Arab population and lose its identity as a democracy, or it would lose its Jewish identity, and Jews would become a minority at the mercy of an Arab majority.

The stakes are high for both Israel and Palestine. Sharon is hoping that the pull-out will remove some of the incitement for militancy. Everything depends on whether Mahmoud Abbas can bring stable government to Palestine and eventually disarm the militant factions.

After the settlers have been removed from the settlements, the homes and synagogues will be demolished. The relatively large single-family dwellings don't suit the Palestinians anyway: in view of the high population density, high density apartment buildings are more suitable. Settlers will be compensated and resettled, and the G8 has promised $9 billion in aid to the Palestinians. Americans have helped Palestinians buy the greenhouse operations constructed by the Israeli settlers. Despite the recent oil windfall, Arab countries have promised a little over $100 million in aid – a long-established pattern in which their solidarity with the suffering Palestinians is mostly rhetorical.

The day I write newspaper and television stories are focusing on Palestinian celebrations and expressions of hope for greater freedom, stability and prosperity. It has been a long wait, and they have suffered more than the Israelis, but both peoples very much need this disengagement to succeed and pave the way to further peace moves.

*GAZA homes being demolished*

## News briefs

First it was red wine. Then it was coffee. Now it's chocolate. Things we used to believe are bad for us are turning out to be good. It's like the CRC in relation to dancing – once we said it was bad and now we're doing it in church.

Of course, wine, coffee and chocolate have often been served in church. Reformed folk aren't killjoys or ascetics. But let's admit it – we used to think of wine, coffee and chocolate as questionable delights without redeeming properties.

Does thinking of them as food or even as medicine make you feel better? Then you're an incorrigible utilitarian. You've reduced food to mere body-fuel. And reductionism *is* bad for you.

Recent studies suggest that eating chocolate can help prevent heart disease and diabetes, and it may even reduce the risk of stroke and dementia by improving blood flow to the brain. I can already see the seniors lining up at the candy counter and for chocolate milkshakes every evening at the manor. My parents were far-seeing: for breakfast they gave us chocolate sprinklies to spread on our bread.

But it's only the real cocoa that's good for you. Most chocolate that we eat contains only a small amount of cocoa, if any. Yes, alas, that's also true of sprinklies. Most of it is sugar, milk and other stuff that may *not* be good for you.

I took a bite of the real chocolate once when I was a little kid. My mother was using it in baking. Never again. It was terribly bitter. Makes you wonder how anyone ever discovered that, diluted with other ingredients, cocoa tastes so good. Maybe the fellow who discovered it thought since it tasted so bitter it had to be good for you – like old-fashioned medicines.

Researchers found that a daily dose of chocolate lowers blood pressure, reduces the bad cholesterol in your blood and improves how the body uses insulin (the hormone that clears sugar from the bloodstream). Apparently, it's the flavinoids in dark chocolate that do all the good work. Flavinoids inhibit blood-clot formation, help blood vessels relax and slow the oxidation of bad cholesterol.

Blueberries also contain flavinoids, so I'm eagerly anticipating the arrival of the blueberry chocolate ice cream to revive my failing memory.

On the subject of diet, scientists have found another way to help those who have a weakness in the food intake department, that is, in resisting temptation. Brainwashing. If you've tried all the magic diets, drugs and exercise without losing a pound, maybe brainwashing will work. A team of psychologists found it could persuade people to avoid fattening foods by implanting unpleasant childhood memories about them – even though the memories were untrue.

According to the study, it was possible to make people dislike strawberry ice cream and like asparagus by convincing them that the first made them sick when they were children and that they really loved the latter as children.

Strikes me almost as a crime against human nature. The person that came up with the idea ought to be sent to Guantanamo.

Suppose you were once overly fond of chocolate. Convinced that it was bad for you, you submitted to this brainwashing technique. And now every time you smell chocolate, you want to vomit. What do you do now that they've discovered it's good for you after all? Wouldn't you want to strangle your "therapist"?

Sounds like a high-risk therapy to me.

But it may have some practical uses. Suppose you have a husband who loves sauerkraut but no one else in the family does. Send him for therapy and you'll eliminate all those squabbles about what's for supper. Of course, he may send you for therapy to cure you of your passion for asparagus.

You know, when I was a kid I hated tomatoes. But now I like them. I wonder whether someone has been fooling with my brain....